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THE MANY HISTORIES OF MUHAMMAD B. QASIM: NARRATING THE MUSLIM CONQUEST OF SINDH

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For my dear parents, Sultan Ahmed Asif and Shaista Ahmed.

ABSTRACT

This study takes as its focus the history and representation of Muhammad b. Qasim, the commander of the Muslim forces which conquered the region of Sindh (present day Pakistan) in the eighth century. The history of Muhammad b. Qasim emerged as a central originary myth for the postcolonial state of Pakistan; formed a piece of the nationalist struggle against the British; and remains a contested historical symbol. To understand the many social and political functions of the history of Muhammad b. Qasim, I begin with the earliest extant accounts of the conquest and attempt to delineate "what happened" from "what is said to have happened." I argue for the re-casting of these histories outside of nationalist/post-colonial paradigms, in order to situate them as regional histories, produced within the "frontier of Sindh" - a liminal perspective mediating between the global and the local. This perspective allows us to examine the production of such histories, and the afterlives of the texts, in political and cultural memory, within their historiographical, literary and political contexts across the *longue durée*.

The introduction makes two broad points: First, I argue for continuity, for a "persistence of history," between pre-modern and modern, between colonial and precolonial. Second, I argue for a shift of our analytical focus from the nation-state to the region, in order to gain a more granular sense of the ways in which histories are produced and consumed by various publics. In this, my study offers a corrective to the dominance of certain historiographical strains in South Asian studies. I situate my work within broader cultural and political memory projects, drawing

parallels between Muhammad b. Qasim and the contested memories of figures such as Charlemagne, Shivaji, and the Kahina. Finally, I provide a short overview of recent works that share sympathetic methodologies to my project.

In the second chapter, I aim to situate India (and Sindh) in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic historiography - in Qur'an and Hadīth, in the earliest Arab geographies, in the *ajāib* (Wonders of India) literature and, finally, in the *futūh* (conquest) literature. Additionally, I present the earliest, and fullest, history of Muhammad b. Qasim and his conquest of Sindh, from the extant sources - in order to delineate, clearly, the "testimony" of these sources.

In the third chapter, I focus specifically on *Chachnama* - the early thirteenth century text that holds a central, hegemonic, position in this historiography. In analyzing it as a "frontier text," I read it within the political and cultural framework of its production, and the literary genres within which it positions itself. I demonstrate that contrary to scholarly consensus, *Chachnama* is not a translation of an earlier Arabic history of the conquest. I show that it was composed, within a scale of texts and within layers of genre influences, by 'Ali Kufi as a radically new text, arguing for a new basis of a frontier Islamic society - one which based itself on shared moral principles with the non-Muslim inhabitants of Sindh. In the last section, I demonstrate *Chachnama*'s significant influence on the 'representations' of Muhammad b. Qasim in the colonial and post-colonial time - an influence that can now be analyzed after restoring the text to its thirteenth century milieu.

In the fourth chapter, I trace the chain of transmission of Muhammad b. Qasim's history from the late medieval Persian chronicles to the early modern British Orientalists and, finally, to the post-colonial regional and national histories in Pakistan. I

follow two strains: the political imaginary (school textbooks, official histories) and the historical imaginary (historical novels, public and popular history), outlining the political contexts and audiences of each particular presentation of Muhammad b. Qasim. In juxtaposition to these two complimentary strains, my last section focuses on the regional imaginary to highlight Sindhi sub-nationalists and their challenges to this historiography.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sacred Uc̣h

Uc̣h Sharif, a small and dusty town, lies about 160 miles south-west of Multan near the plains of the river Indus in Sindh, Pakistan. Its landscape is dotted with ancient ruins and Sufi mausoleums, fueling a healthy traffic of believers and devotees. Uc̣h Sharif, literally the "Blessed Uc̣h" has a remarkable history, over the past millennia, as a crossroads for those with spiritual and political ambitions. Those who come now, come to pay homage to the many sacred relics from Islam's past in India - stored in the Sufi shrines, in mosques, and in private collections. There is always a tour guide available to escort you to such relics that are attributed directly to the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632), his family, or his earliest followers. You can seek to view the Prophet's own handkerchief, his son-in-law Ali's footprint in a black stone, his grandson Hussain's sword or other curios - such as the wall that the Sufi master, Jalāluddin Maqhdūm Surkẖ Posh Bukhāri (c. 1192-1291) rode from Delhi to Uc̣h. In the eyes of believers these objects remain unparalleled as possessors of divine power and of the spiritual heritage of their land.

In popular memory and history, whether oral or textual, these artifacts are routinely held up as proof of the special position afforded to Uc̣h in the sacred landscape of South Asia. Local histories maintain that Uc̣h welcomed the very first Mus-

lims who came across the Arabian Gulf with the message of Islam. The Prophet himself, it is reported, sent a delegation of his *sahāba* (Companions) to al-Hind to spread the new faith. Such originary narratives are causally intertwined with claims about Uc̣h's centrality to the propagation of the faith to India during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries. Thusly Uc̣h - and by extension the region of Sindh - becomes the founding block of Pakistan itself in the eighth century. One particular example being the many *ahādīth* (Traditions) that circulate in Uc̣h, promising "Pakistan" as the eventual salvation of the Muslim community.[1]

A cluster of unmarked graves, in a non-descript landscape, are venerated as the final resting place of those earliest believers - the companions of the Prophet. Some of these clay-caked graves are peculiarly long, over 18 feet each, as though a visual representation of their "larger than life" histories.[2] Around the graves, one can observe, fresh offerings of dry fruits, beans, unsewn cloth, bits of silver and strings - all attesting to the continual significance of these graves in the mythic cosmology of this town. One is struck by the certainty of tone and of belief when listening to the inhabitants of Uc̣h - whether those encountered at the local tea stall or the dignitaries of the realm - when they speak about these graves and their significance.[3] When pressed as to why the companions would come to Uc̣h, a range

1. For an overview of Uc̣h's spiritual status, see Masood Hasan Shahab, *Khitā Pak-e Uc̣h* [The Pure region of Uch] (Bahawalpur: Urdu Academy, 1968).

2. On the significance and history of long graves in Islam see Brannon M. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) 100-22.

3. While they are never identified as the graves of any particular person from the Islamic past, sometimes the name of the companion Tamīm al-Ansarī is heard. This name is well-known in Islamic eschatological literature with accounts of his burial in Palestine, Afghanistan and in Tamil Nadu. See David Shulman "Muslim popular literature in Tamil: The Tamirmancari Malai," in ed. Yohanan Friedmann. *Islam in Asia: South Asia*, vol. 1

of answers is delivered: they came here because Uch̤ Sharif has been a sacred site since Adam landed in Sarandip and visited the Indus valley; the Prophet knew that Pakistan was the future of Islam[4]; that Zhu'l Qarnāin (Alexander the Great) found Khidr here; etc. In the face of continued skepticism, the narrators of Uch̤'s past recall memories of rains which partially collapsed some particular grave to reveal a foot - unmolested by centuries underground. Others reports tell of visitations in dreams by the companions, provided one spends a full 40 nights in meditation and prayer by the graves. The historian needing more proof simply has to follow suit.

1.1.1 Muhammad b. Qasim and the Coming of Islam

The peaceful settlement in Uch̤ by the Companions of the Prophet is only one of the narratives about Islam's arrival in Sindh. Roughly 40 miles east of Karachi is the archeological site of Banbhore - identified as the once-city of Daybul. Amidst outlines of digs, foundations and pathways is a rusted metal sign from the Department of Archeology and Museums: "Grand Mosque (Built in 8th Cent A.D.) This is the first mosque in South Asia." Some determined lovers have scratched their initials on top of the word "mosque." At the nearby Banbhore Museum, there are dioramas and murals depicting Muhammad b. Qasim, the young Muslim general

(Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), and David Cook, "Tamīm al-Dārī," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (University of London, 61, no. 1 (1998): 20-28. The other Companion whose name comes up is Mālik bin Dīnār, similarly spurious, but similarly evocative of "earliest direct contact between Islam and Hinduism."

4. One often quoted "tradition" presents the Prophet as exclaiming that he smells a wonderful smell in the air from India - intimating that the future of the Muslim ummah will be in the sub-continent.

who led the most successful campaign to subdue this local kingdom of Raja Dāhir between 712 and 715, and established that first Grand Mosque. His conquest of Sindh constitutes another - much more contentious - rubric of histories and memories concerning Islam's arrival.

Since the 1970s, towns and cities across Sindh have celebrated the 9th and 10th day of the month of Ramadan (in the Islamic calendar) as *Yaum Bāb-ul Islam* (Day of the Gateway of Islam). The event generates tremendous public spectacle - special recitals of the Qur'an, speeches, editorials, poetry and ghazal gatherings along with rhetorical flourishes from local politicians and religious dignitaries alike. Local politicians call upon the "youth of the day" to rise to the challenges of modernity and become "new Muhammad bin Qasims." An example is the following news report which appeared in the *Dawn* - Pakistan's premier English daily:

> Youm-i-Babul Islam was observed on Wednesday in various parts of the city, and speakers in various meetings recalled the services rendered by Mohammad bin Qasim for the people of this region who defeated the forces of tyranny, and established a rule of law here. They said even today to save the humanity from the clutches of the evil forces, a Mohammad bin Qasim is badly needed who should foil conspiracies against humanity and again make the world a cradle of peace. They said after the carnage of innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan, the real face of the US had been unveiled.
> The Ummah today needed a Muhammad bin Qasim who could save it from the atrocities of the US. Jamaat-i-Islami Sindh held meetings and gatherings in Karachi, Sukkur, Larkana, Nawabshah, Shikarpur, Jecobabad and other cities and towns to observe the Youm-i-Babul Islam. JI chief Dr Mumtaz Ali Memon, speaking at a meeting, recalled that the US and its lackeys were involved in heinous crimes against the humanity. Anjuman Naujwanan-i-Islam (ANI) observed Youm-i-Babul Islam in various cities of the province. In this regard, a central moot was held in Karachi. ANI chief Tariq Mehboob addressing the moot said the youth of the Ummah were the custodians of heroic traditions of Mohammad bin Qasim. He asked the youth to play a role of Muhammad bin Qasim

to foil the evil conspiracies of anti-Pakistan forces.[5]

Officials herald Muhammad b. Qasim as the "First Citizen of Pakistan" and the invasion as the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. They stress the greatness of Muhammad b. Qasim's deeds: saving the people of Sindh from the oppression of their Hindu rulers, establishing an Islamic order in South Asia, becoming a just and judicious ruler. These are conceived of as continuing tasks for the modern state of Pakistan and overarching goals for the community of Muslims in Pakistan. Simultaneously, this history connects, in its remembrance, to the political lives of Muslims around the world. As can be seen in the above quote, the actions of the United States in Iraq become part of this narrative. The political memory of Muslims is heavily invested in the history of Muhammad b. Qasim. An emblematic example, demonstrating the durability of this political memory, is the following op-ed published in the Urdu *Daily Jang*, in 1997:

> Russia, China, Philippine [sic], Korea and Ceylon etc. are our neighboring countries. However, they are still swathed in the darkness of unbelief while Pakistan exists in the name of Islam. Why is that? The answer is clear that those countries did not have a true Mujahid of Islam such as Muhammad bin Qasim enter triumphantly with the message of Islam. If we view this in that respect, the dream of Muhammad bin Qasim remains unfulfilled. Iran has crushed America, a handful of mujahideen in Chechnya have defeated Russia and installed Shari'a. Turkey, Algiers, Egypt, Sudan and Palestine are immersed in the epic battle between Truth and Evil. All of these are signs that tell us that once again Muhammad bin Qasim, Salahudin Ayubi, Sayyid Ahmed Barelvi's true jihad will rise and all nations will bow down to the eminence of Islam.[6]

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5. *Dawn* (Karachi), Oct 4, 2006, A9.

6. "Yaum Bāb-ul Islam ka Tar'īkhi Manzir," [The Historic background of the day of the gateway of Islam], *Daily Jang*, January 22, 1997, 14.

Muhammad b. Qasim, then, is not only a founder of the Pakistani state but also its defender, a signifier of its warrior ethos. Most importantly, he is a foundational figure in the story of Islam's arrival to India.

The two narratives described thus far concerning the "coming of Islam" through spiritual guides emigrating to South Asia from Arabia and Iran, or through the military conquest of Sindh region by Muhammad b. Qasim - are also the predominant frameworks in current historiography regarding Islam's arrival in South Asia. There is the "Conquerors and Colonizers" reading, which stresses the political conquests of Muslims in India - often beginning in the eighth century, but finding real foothold only after the Ghaznavid and Gurid expansions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In marked contrast to which, is the "Mercantile and Spiritual Migrants" reading which emphasizes the settlement and migration patterns of traders and Sufi orders. A pattern which turns into a large-scale migration of ministerial, administrative, and other knowledge-based communities to India, after the Mongol devastations of Iran and Iraq in the thirteenth century. These divergent trajectories of Islam's arrival to India are rarely shown to intersect. They possess self-contained histories with a remarkable appeal in both popular and scholarly imaginations (and as such, their main function lies in the political and the communal realm). At best, they are considered in a complementary fashion, as in Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal's introductory text:

> The eastern frontier of early Islam was reached when Muhammad bin Qasim conquered Sind in 712. So the Islamic belief in one God and in Muhammad as the final prophet struck very early roots in at least one region of north-western India. From the eighth century onwards, Arab traders also settled on the western coast of India, but they were primarily interested in profits and did not engage in attempts to bring

about any large-scale conversions to Islam.[7]

The analysis that emerges from these twin narratives, is understandably, bifurcated itself. The first reading is adversarial - positing Muslim versus non-Muslim, outsider versus native - taking as a given that such categories have stable meanings. The second focuses on cohabitation with the local communities, for "profit" even, as illustrated in the above quote, but places them within a global narrative of Islam, robbing them of their particularities. Hence, we have sectarian historians emphasizing the colonial aggression of Muslim conquerors, on the one hand, and the secular historians emphasizing the co-lived histories and syncretic development of traditions on the other. In their broad focus, these narratives are severely limited. They rest on immutable, yet generalized categories such as "Islam," "nation" and even "community," yielding little historical specificity and, in most cases, forcing particularly anachronistic readings of the past.

More specifically, these narratives occlude other contestations that challenge the national or communitarian readings of history - such as Sindhi regional histories and memories.

Throughout the twentieth century, demands for Sindhi regional autonomy have shadowed Pakistan's state self-proclamation as a unified homeland for the Muslims of South Asia. Though it does not have the militant characteristic of the Baluchistani separatist movement, Sindhi calls for a *Sindhu Desh* (Sindh homeland) are just as trenchant of a challenge to the state. The perceived histories of Sindh before the coming of Islam, the fiercely contested autonomies of local Sindhi rulers

7. Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (New York: Routledge Press, 2004), 17-8.

throughout the Mughal and British period, and a markedly different relationship with religion, play significant roles in these claims. Where some of the Believers in Uch̤ Sharif and the national government seek to build continuities to the earliest history of Islam, the Sindhi *qaumi* (nation) conceives of Muhammad b. Qasim as a rupture in the history of their 'ancient nation'.

> Pakistan is a denial of Indian geography and history. It goes against the grain of Ashoka and Akbar. In any case, if the Arabs who speak the same language and swear by the same Allah can have separate states, why cannot the Sindhis, the Punjabis, the Baluchis, and the Pakhtoons have separate states of their own? Sindh has always been there. Pakistan is a passing show. Sindh is a fact, Pakistan is a fiction. Sindhis are a nation, *qaum*, Muslims are not. Sindhi language is 2500 years old, Urdu is only 250 years old. Sindhi has 52 letters, Urdu has only 26. The enslavement of Sindh by the Punjab in the name of *Pakistan and Islam* is a fraud. It is the most serious crisis in the history of Sindh in the past 2000 years.[8]

In the bazaars of Hyderabad and Thatta, one can acquire pamphlets or audio CDs voicing praise and valorization, not for the Muslim conqueror but for his defeated opponent, Raja Dāhir, celebrated here as a Sindhi hero. The global diasporic community of Sindhis maintain websites and online forums, replete with postings criticizing the destruction of a harmonious Sindhi homeland by invading Arabs. In this anti-nationalist narrative, the ethos of the State of Pakistan is seen awash in military dictatorships, religious extremism, and Punjabi/Urdu domination - echoing the very first colonial conquest of the region in the eighth century. The claimaints to the "truths" of these various narratives make extensive usage of medieval and colonial chronicles to buttress their histories. Archeology, epigraphy, numismatics, textual or oral histories, myths and folklore are all called upon to construct

8. K. R. Malkani, *The Sindh Story* (Hyderabad: Allied Publishers, 1976), 126-8.

narratives of conquest, oppression and the struggle for emancipation. The memory of a 5,000 year old Sindhi *qaum* is rigorously debated in everyday public spaces with just as much fervor as the originary myth of the nation-state of Pakistan is preached to the citizens of Pakistan.

1.2 The Course of the Study

This study began with the question, Why Muhammad b. Qasim? Why did General Zia ul-Haq's nascent government choose to build a national identity out of the mythography of this distant conqueror? Why this particular history of Pakistan? I wanted to investigate how this particular past was constructed by the state and, once implemented, on what grounds it was contested, and by whom. I wanted to trace a history of this contestation, and, if possible, the history of this construction. My interest in the various uses of the past, or rather pasts, emerged from a broader desire to engage in the public life of history and interrogate whether it truly was a modern epiphenomenon, as has often been argued in scholarly literature on the "invention of Traditions" or "imagined communities."

The question, reformulated: Why was the history of Muhammad b. Qasim written? Who wrote it? For what purpose? What was the site of its production? What were the political, cultural and social contexts that influenced this production? For what audience? In answering this set of interrelated questions, I trace this history to its earliest extents.

The historiography of Muhammad b. Qasim can be divided into six phases, in reverse chronological order:

1. 1950s - present. This period coinciding with the postcolonial Islamic state of Pakistan, frames the creation of Muhammad b. Qasim as a national hero. The political turmoil over One Unit, the partition of West Pakistan, and General Zia ul-Haq's Arabization and Sunnification policies provide the political and cultural framework within which accounts of Muhammad b. Qasim were produced. The histories, to broaden our usage, of Muhammad b. Qasim during this period include school textbooks, official accounts, historical novels, tele-plays, and public histories.

2. 1900 - 1947. The first full translation, into English, of a central, regional history of Muhammad b. Qasim, the *Chachnama*, was published in 1900, by renowned Sindhi author Mirza Qalich Beg. His effort coincided with a renaissance of nationalist and communalist attention to the history of Islam's arrival in India - and to Muhammad b. Qasim. The histories produced are often communal: fluctuating between accounts of the connections between India and Islam's origins in Arabia, or situating Muhammad b. Qasim among the more notorious invaders of India.

3. 1830s - 1900. The British East India Company invaded and annexed Sindh in 1843 under Charles Napier. The Company had multiple interests in Sindh, as a frontier zone to perceived Russian and French threats via Persia, as a zone between Ranjit Singh's Lahore and Dost Mohammad Khan's Kabul, and as part of Opium trade's route along the Indus River and the port of Karachi. To pursue these interests, the Company proposed extensive ordinance maps and "memoirs" of the region. The history of Muhammad b. Qasim's conquest of Sindh became a center-piece of such histories. In the later half of the nine-

teenth century, these official Company accounts were folded into universalist histories of India by Orientalists and Muhammad b. Qasim became a key signifier of India's fractured history.

4. 1600. The Mughal emperor Akbar's invasion of Sindh, in 1592, prompted the writing of Mir Ma'sūmi's history of Sindh. It remains one of the only major medieval works to discuss Muhammad b. Qasim.

5. 1216. The text at the heart of this study, 'Ali Kufi's *Chachnama,* was written in Ucḥ in the early thirteenth century against the backdrop of Mongol invasions of the Islamicate world. For all of the historiography which followed, this is the primary text. One of the earliest Persian histories to be composed in India, *Chachnama* is a unique re-formulation of Islamic pasts and contains the most significant construction of Muhammad b. Qasim. In its vision, *Chachnama* provides the only fusion of the two narratives of Islam's arrival in India: conquest *and* co-habitation.

6. 850 - 950. The earliest Arab accounts of Muhammad b. Qasim's history emerge in the conquest literature of the mid-ninth century. The universal histories of al-Ṭabarī and al-Ya'qūbi contain some slim accounts of the frontier of Hind. The most substantial, and earliest extant, account of Muhammad b. Qasim and the conquest of Sindh is in al-Balādhurī's *Futūh al-Buldān.*

The Muslim conquest of Sindh occurred from 712-715.

1.2.1 Production of Narratives

The distance, both temporal and geographical, between the conquest itself and the earliest accounts of it necessitates some explanation of how we conceive of this history. The positivist, or constructivist, approaches remain, for me, an unsatisfactory engagement with this history. That is, the reconstruction of the "facts" of Muhammad b. Qasim's life and actions, or merely the attempted recuperation of "what happened" will necessarily remain an unfinished process. We simply do not have enough evidence to get at that "historical truth". The quest for the "historical Muhammad b. Qasim" is quixotic from the outset.

Does that mean that this study is simply a history of representation? I would argue, following Paul Ricoeur, that "the fact is not the event," and to traverse the distance between the two, historians must rely on "documentary proof, which designates the part of historical truth accessible at this state of the historiographical operation."[9] It is that "documentary proof" that showcases the modes of production of history, and through that production of narratives, allows access to a richer understanding of historical memory.

> History reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives. What matters most are the process and conditions of production of such narratives. Only a focus on that process can uncover the ways in which the two sides of historicity intertwine in a particular context. Only through the overlap can we discover the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others.[10]

9. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting.* trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 178.

10. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 25.

This study, then, hopes to overcome the 'positivist' vs 'representational' dichotomy by focusing specifically on the production of these texts and the sites of their production. In *Querying the Medieval,* Ronald Inden provides a methodological (and theoretical) framework for historicizing texts, so as to move beyond the limitations imposed by colonial and post-colonial philologists and structuralists. Drawing on the work of R. G. Collingwood, Inden advances the notion of simple or complex "agents" who author texts that are dialogical in their discursive nature and operate within a "scale of texts" defined as "later agents and their texts [that] overlap with those of their predecessors and contemporaries and, by engaging in a process of criticism, apporpriation, repetition, refutation, amplification, abbreviation, and so on, position themselves in relation to them."[11] Such a reading allows us to pay attention to the sites and practices of their production; to examine them within the literary genres with which they explicitly and implicitly engage and; to frame their social function. Echoing Inden:

> We wish to establish a dialogical or interdiscursive relationship with the texts we study. Instead of looking at them as dead monuments, as mere sources of factual information or the expression of a creative and exotic genius that we can only appreciate in itself for itself, or as the accidental expression/sedimentation of some larger structure or context, we want to see them as living arguments both in their historic usages and by virtue of our reenactment of their arguments, in our own present. We want to see what we can learn from these texts that pertains to our own time and its problems.[12]

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11. Ronald B. Inden, Jonathan S. Walters, and Daud Ali. *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12.

12. *ibid, Querying the Medieval,* 14.

1.2.2 Site of Production

One explicit reason to disentangle history from the nation-state is to remove the long shadows of modern categories from medieval pasts. Rhetorically, the imagined construction of Muhammad b. Qasim as the first citizen of Pakistan, as well as the ancient history of Moenjodaro as the history of Pakistan serve the same purpose. Though the nation-state provides a convenient structural framework for the modern study of history, it relegates to the status of alterity historical geography and historical memory. In Patrick Geary's terms the "poisoned landscape" of nineteenth century nationalism obfuscates the simple statement that "other forms of imagining nations did not exist in the past."[13]

A goal of this study is to present a geographical framework - the frontier of Sindh - which continuously produces these histories of Muhammad b. Qasim, mediating between the universal and the local. Understanding the role and significance of Sindh in the mental geography of the Islamicate world is central to the effort of contextualizing the production of historical narratives of Muhammad b. Qasim. I draw on the work in historical geography of O.H.K. Spate. Though dated, Spate has a highly useful discussion of "perennial nuclear regions" or "basis of power" which continuously sees foreign excursions - the region of Sapta Sindhu, the seven rivers, Indus, being one of them. On the edges of these regions, in the "shatter zones" are the "saddle states" which are dependencies of the dominant powers.[14] The three adjoining saddle-states of Kirmān, Makrān and Sindh were clients, through history,

13. Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 17.

14. O. H. K. Spate, *India And Pakistan: A General and Regional Geography.* (London: Methuen & Co., 1953), 148-9.

of the Sassanids down to the British. A similarly complex history of political and military domination in present in north-western neighboring regions - Zabulistan, Sīstān and Khurasan. I have also drawn upon Igor Kopytoff's model of an "internal frontier."[15] Kopytoff's description of an "interstitial network of thousands of potential local frontiers" which produce the space for the "emergence of numerous new, small-scale and independent political formations" is a useful complementary to Spate's historical geography.[16] Kopytoff combines the political ecology and geography of the frontier with the political culture that shaped its perception and its realities. In his discussion of the frontier as a historical process, he outlines eleven steps which lead, eventually, to the frontier society either growing into a new metropolitan society or vanishing completely. For our discussion, three of those processes are especially illuminating in the context of the role played by Sindh as an internal frontier to the Islamicate world:

1. The Institutional Vacuum: According to Kopytoff, "Once outsiders have defined an area as a frontier and have intruded into it it, in order to settle in it, there begins a process of social construction that, if successful, bring into being a social society."[3] The political turmoil that followed the Arab conquest of Sindh, created the necessary conditions of an institutional vacuum. The movement of power center of the Islamicate world away from Baghdad, kept Sindh in a state of perpetual flux, far from the metropoles. It is this institutional vacuum that various polities, originating in Khurāsān, Afghanistan, Gujarāt or Deccan, sought to fill.

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15. Igor Kopytoff, *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 8. My thanks to Aaron Bady for bringing this work to my attention.

16. *ibid.,* 10.

2. The Claims of the Center: Even as this internal frontier saw conflict between varied parties to settle or raid, it retreated from the effective control of the metropolitan forces. And "the center could only practice political intimidation and extract sporadic tribute through institutionalized raiding or undisguised pillage. Finally, came the potential frontier - areas beyond the effective reach of the metropolitan power, which nevertheless sometimes conceitedly claimed to control it."[17] In the case of Sindh, there were two centers claiming the frontier - Baghdad and Cairo, Sunni and Ismā'ilī - and Sindh became the site of a proxy-war between the two, fought by those with their own claims on the center for legitimacy.

3. The Regional Context: The third, and most important, process happened after the raiding lead to settlement patterns and the new-comers were faced with creating a permanent, new metropole in the frontier. It is then, that their attention turned to legitimizing their presence to the pre-existing populations as well as to their rivals: "The principal theme in the legitimation of African rulers vis-à-vis their subjects and immediate neighbors was that of 'first-comer' - in one of its many senses. But the founding group also needed two other kinds of validating charters, one providing an existential validation of the group to itself, the other providing validation in the eyes of other regional polities."[18]

17. ibid., 30.

18. ibid., 71.

A Confusion of Names

A careful textual and genealogical mapping of this history must admit the radical discontinuities or the artificial continuities within the very basic terminologies that must be employed. Arab, for example, can denote a shared linguistic, cultural register or ethnic register without any clear indication, through history, as to when categories of "Arabness" were adopted by populations outside of the Arabian peninsula. Did the current inhabitants of Iraq or Syria always consider themselves Arab? Even more problematic are the terms Turk or 'Ajami. The meta-categories provide other difficulties. What about "Muslim" as a stable category of self-identification of the earliest believers as *mu'minīn* (the pious)? Geographical terminology is just as difficult to navigate. The borders of Sīstān, Khurāsān etc. shift throughout this history. This study will not be able to put to rest any of these issues. It will try to be as careful and circumspect, as is possible, in using the terms *as they appear in the sources*. I will leave the majority of place-names and category-names intact in my translations.

1.3 Plan of the Chapters

The second chapter provides the historical geography for the conquest of Sindh in the eighth century. I situate Hind and Sindh in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic historiography - in Qur'an and *Hadīth*, in the earliest Arab geographies, in the *ajāib* (Wonders of India) literature and, finally, in the *futūh* (conquest) literature. Next, I present the earliest, and fullest, history of

Muhammad b. Qasim and his conquest of Sindh, from the extant sources in order to delineate, clearly, the "testimony" of the earliest sources.

The third chapter focuses specifically on *Chachnama* - this early thirteenth century text holds a central, hegemonic, position in the historiography of Muhammad b. Qasim. In analyzing it as a *frontier text*, I read it within the political and cultural framework of its production, and the literary genres within which it positions itself. I demonstrate, that contrary to scholarly consensus, *Chachnama* is not a translation of an earlier Arabic history of the conquest. I show that it was composed, within a scale of texts and within layers of genre influences, by 'Ali Kufi as a radically new text, arguing for a new understanding of a frontier Islamic society based on shared moral principles with the non-Muslim inhabitants of Sindh. In the last section, I demonstrate *Chachnama*'s significant influence on the 'representations' of Muhammad b. Qasim in the colonial and post-colonial time - an influence that can now be analyzed after restoring the text to its thirteenth century milieu.

The fourth chapter traces the chain of transmission of Muhammad b. Qasim's history from the late medieval Persian chronicles to the early modern British Orientalists and, finally to the post-colonial regional and national histories in Pakistan. I follow two strains: the political imaginary (school textbooks, official histories) and the historical imaginary (historical novels, public and popular history) and outline the political contexts and audiences of each particular presentation of Muhammad b. Qasim. In juxtaposition to these two complementary strains, my last section focuses on the regional imaginary to highlight the Sindhi sub-nationalists and their challenges to this historiogra-

phy.

This study draws on primary texts in a variety of languages, Arabic, Persian, English, Urdu and Sindhi - all of which require distinct transliterations into English. I have tried to maintain some consistency in transliteration. Muhammad b. Qasim, for example, is standardized across the sources. I am responsible for all translations, unless noted otherwise.

CHAPTER 2

FRONTIER WITH THE HOUSE OF GOLD

2.1 Translocal Networks: The Indian Ocean

We begin by noting Martin Lewis' caution that "geographical terminology before the nineteenth century was anything but precise. Labels for large expanses of water or land were often deployed in a casual manner, imperfect synonyms abounded, and the transposition of place-names was common."[1] The Indian Ocean is the perfect illustration of Lewis' warning, not only in terms of labeling but also in definition. Consider that the Indian Ocean arc, geographically speaking, can extend from the Red Sea to the South China Sea. It encompasses the East African coastlines from Somalia down to Mozambique, the southern Arabian coasts of Yemen, Oman and the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the western coasts of India, the Bay of Bengal and around to the South China Sea. Even as it connects all of these economies and societies, its "Ocean-ness," until recently, was a highly debatable formulation. Like the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean is situated at the center of numerous East-West, North-South connections throughout the history of various civilizations and it is precisely because of this rich history of contacts across

1. Martin W. Lewis, "Dividing the Ocean Sea," *Geographical Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1999): 96.

millennia, that "Indian Ocean" has become a category that obfuscates more than it reveals - imprecise in its usage and uncertain in its chronologies.

The Indian Ocean arc, thus, needs further delineation. One can single out the various seas that constitute the arc: the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Bengal, and the South China Sea. On this map, we can plot out four distinct regions of maritime contact and movement between coastal cities and communities: Between 1. the Gulf and East Africa (Hadramawt to Somalia), 2. the Gulf and the western shores of India (Muscat to Daybul or Surat or Calicut), 3. the eastern coast of Bengal and the Andaman/Malay islands and 4. the southern China shore and Malay/Ceylon. It should be noted that these networks varied a great deal over time in terms of activity and exposure. They were also augmented by smaller networks of transitory goods, and supplemented by land routes, such as the Red Sea routes up the Arabian peninsula or the Sindh and Gujarat routes.

Next, it should be noted that discussions of the "Indian Ocean network" in the ancient or the medieval, the early modern or, even the modern eras, are really discussions of particular nodes on this network - all with their own contingent histories. For example, the two dominant foci of examination in existing scholarship are the Harrapan/Mesopotamian trade connection and the ancient Rome/India trade - both of which would constitute only one arterial network among the many Indian Ocean nodes.[2] Conspicuously, neither the

2. "Rome" can mean anything from Hellenic Egypt to Byzantine Constantinople. There is also confusion in sources whether "India" refers to the subcontinent or East Africa, Ceylon or even China (Notwithstanding, the occasional references to coastal towns of Malabar and Sindou [Sindh]). See Philip Mayerson, "A Confusion of Indias: Asian India and African India in the Byzantine Sources," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 113, no. 2 (April

China/Western India or China/Malay, nor the Arabia/India nor Arabia/East Africa arcs have garnered much scholarly attention. Moreover, the scholarship has had an overwhelming tilt towards situating the trade within a Rome/East or West/East framework. It wasn't until K. N. Chaudhuri's *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (1985) and Janet Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (1989) that a corrective was offered to the Rome-centered scholarship. Scholars such as the late Ashin Das Gupta, André Wink, and Ranabir Chakravarti have since moved the conversation forward. More promisingly, the scope of inquiry is advancing from the movements and networks of trade and goods to ideas, peoples and communities in the work of Li Guo, Tansen Sen, Gwyn Campbell, and Denys Lombard.[3]

The complexity of source material (from linguistic variation to major lacuna), the diversity of nodes, and the resultant fissures in historiography, make it entirely impossible to paint a comprehensive picture of the "Indian Ocean world" that makes sense from the fifth millennium BCE to the modern era. In fact, such a broad canvas of inquiry is one of the reasons why Indian Ocean studies are so often, quite frustrating to read. Our archeological (as well as numismatic and epigraphical) evidence for pre-medieval periods is sketchy - due both to the vastness of terrains that need coverage and the political realities that have made inquisitive activities, such as digs, quixotic, to say the least. Our textual evidence is no better. The sources are limited, scat-

- June 1993), 169-174.

3. For an excellent example of the cultural seascape of Indian Ocean, see Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Geneology and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

tered, and often uninformative and require expertise from classical Greek to Sanskrit to Chinese and much else. As a result, we have clusters of archeological and epigraphic data that sometimes dovetails with anachronistic textual data, but often, does not. Scholars are working with many silences. Since our scope of inquiry is limited to the contacts between the Indus valley coastal towns and the Arabian Gulf, I will focus specifically on the Arab-Indian connections, and, in so doing, illustrate the source-material difficulties at hand.

2.1.1 Rome and the East

Starting with the Red Sea/Arabian Gulf trade, the archeological evidence for sea-faring and exchange networks in the Indian Ocean world begins as early as the fourth and third millennia BCE, with ships relying on monsoon winds, sea currents, and navigable straits, between the Harappans and Mesopotamians.[4] Those earliest contacts involved exchanges of ore metals, grains and other ceremonial artifacts.[5] Into the Hellenistic period, a substantial trade "crossed the waters between Roman Egypt, the eastern coast of Africa, the

4. The pattern of yearly monsoon winds, tides and currents in the Indian Ocean provides a ready framework for understanding the movement of goods and people through the many millennia. During the summer months (June-November) the monsoon winds and the tide go down the eastern shore of the Red Sea hugging the coastline of the Gulf across to Western India, around the tip of the subcontinent into the Bay of Bengal, and from the Islands into the Southern China Sea. During the winter months (December to May), the winds re-trace their path back.

5. See Elisabeth C. L. During Caspers, "Sumer, Coastal Arabia and the Indus Valley in Protoliterate and Early Dynastic Eras: Supporting Evidence for a Cultural Linkage," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 22, no. 2 (May 1979), 121-135.

western and southern coasts of Arabia, and the western coast of India."[6]

This sea-trade supplemented the land routes via Petra and Palmyra in Syria, and consisted mainly of "the acquisition of elephants used by the Egyptian military and of gold to facilitate Ptolemaic payment of mercenary troops and other related military expenditures."[7] On their return, the ships carried back "oil and wine, glassware, drinking vessels, tools, precious stones, copper." This pattern, roughly stated, of merchandise originating in China, the Maldives, East Africa, or Southern India and traveling via sea and land routes to markets in Greater Syria, Egypt and the Mediterranean world persists in the classical period.[8]

The majority of classical Greek accounts of maritime activity throughout the Red Sea, Arabia and coastal cities of India, survive in later histories and geographies such as Strabo (c. 64 BCE to 21 CE), Pliny the Elder (before 77), Claudius Ptolemy (c. 146-170), and others. The most notable source on the trade between Rome and India from the first century is the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* - a document written by an unknown sailor between 40-70 C.E and which survives in a single manuscript from the early tenth century.[9]

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6. Lionel Casson, "South Arabia's Maritime Trade in the First Century A.D.," *L'Arabie préislamique et son environnement historique et culturel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989).

7. Steven E. Sidebotham, "Ports of the Red Sea and the Arabia-India Trade," *Rome and India: The Ancient Sea Trade* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991)

8. For the classical study, see E. H. Warmington. *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928). Also, Mortimer Wheeler. *Rome beyond the Imperial Frontiers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954). And most recently, G. W. Bowersock. *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983).

9. See Lionel Casson. *The Periplus Maris Erythraei: Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989)

Note that, while there are *some* explicit mentions of ports on Indus River in Pliny and Periplus, "India" in these earliest sources could just as easily refer to China or Ethiopia or Sri Lanka, as it could to sites in Gujarat, Kerala or Sindh. From these early sources, the trade seems to encompass only luxury items - gold, pearls, gemstones, silk, etc. However, recent research shows that the earliest trade between Rome and India had a much heavier emphasis on staple and bulk goods: copper, salt, sugar, ordinary cloth, timber, coconut coir, pepper, and iron.[10] Even this partial history of Roman contacts with India disperses after the second century. George Hourani, in *Arab Seafaring*, notes the lacuna:

> Our sources for the third, fourth and fifth centuries are of the poorest. The lively curiosity of the ancient Greeks, embracing every side of life, gives way in literature to an excessive attention to the well-being of the soul. Arab historians and geographers of later centuries supply little independent information of any value concerning a period so long before Islam. The surviving Persian literature of this period, and the Syriac writings of any period, are almost entirely religious; while the various literatures of India have always been unrivalled in their aversion to mundane matters of fact. Thus we can obtain no more than a few isolated glimpses of Oriental navigation in this age.[11]

This decline in sources - both textual and archeological - coincides with the decline in trade with Rome. The rise of the Persian Sassanid empire (mid-third century) and the movement of the capital from Rome to Constantinople are both contributing factors. However, as Hourani notes, this was also the

10. See Ranabir Chakravarti, *Trade in Early India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001) for a fuller discussion of the historiographical issues surrounding India and Indian Ocean trade.

11. George Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 35-8.

period when regional networks of Chinese and Sasanian ships increased and flourished.

2.1.2 Merchants and Pilgrims

The decline of Roman presence in the Red Sea and beyond coincided with, or more likely was a result of, the rise of the Sasanian and Chinese merchants and the development of multi-nodal trade in the Indian Ocean world - Madagascar and Indonesia, Somalia and Aden, Quanzhou and Kerala, and above all, Ceylon or Sarandip. The paucity of textual archives regarding trade in these locales during late antiquity remains a problem. Thus, these local networks, with their ebbs and flow, are largely hidden from history. We can surmise from archeological, as well as a few textual sources, that the Sasanians (roughly 226 - 651 CE) took over much of the trade flowing in the Persian and Arabia Gulf from the fourth century onwards. Excavations in cities like Siraf, Rishahr, and Jazirat al-Ghanam have revealed substantial evidence of Sasanian port activity and settlement.[12] These port sites acted as trading hubs with merchants from various nodes trafficking through Sarandip.[13]

The sixth century work by Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography* con-

12. See Derek Kennet and Regina Krahl, *Sasanian and Islamic Pottery from Ras al-Khaimah* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004).

13. The historiographical and etymological links between Sarandip, the Arabic Sarandib, Sinhala-dvipa, Ceylon, and current day, Srilanka are rather convoluted. See James E. Tennent, *Ceylon: An Account of the Island, Physical, Historical, and Topographical, with Notices of Its Natural History, Antiquities and Productions* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860) and W. J. van der Meulen, "Suvarṇadvīpa and the Chrysê Chersonesos" *Indonesia,* 18 (1974). My thanks to Sonam Kachru for the references.

tains a chapter on Sarandip in which he describes a world of translocal trade flowing in and out of its ports - all managed primarily by Sasanian merchants. The island of Sarandip, Cosmas states, was frequented by ships from Persia, China, Ethiopia and India. From China, it imported silk, aloes, cloves, and sandalwood which were taken to places in the Malabar coast, Sindh, Himyar, and Adule. From Indian ports came ivory; pepper from Malabar; musk, castor, and spikenard from Sindh; copper, sesame wood and cloth from Bombay.[14] By the end of the sixth century, the Sasanians controlled the westward flow of this trade by owning the port cities along the Arabian and Persian Gulf as well as the Indus valley city of Daybul, acquired during the reign of Bahrām V (421-438). The Byzantine emperors Justin (518-27) and Justinian (527-65) made repeated efforts to break the Sasanian hold over trade at Sarandip, even convincing the Christian Ethiopian kingdom of Axum to invade and occupy Yemen in 524/25. The Sasanians retaliated by subduing Aden in 575 and taking over Bab al-Mandab, the entrance to the Red Sea.[15]

The description of such nodal sea-routes with transactions happening in a number of coastal economies, is borne out of another source - the accounts of visits to Buddhist shrines in India and Ceylon by Chinese pilgrims from the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries.[16] The earliest extant account, from the Han ambassador Zhang Qian who travelled to *Shen-tu* (India) during the second

14. J. W. McCrindle, *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1898), 366.

15. See David Whitehouse, "Sasanian Maritime Activity" in *The Indian Ocean in Antiquity*, ed. Julian Reade (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996).

16. See Richard B. Mather, "Chinese and Indian Perceptions of Each Other between the First and Seventh Centuries," *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 112, no. 1 (Jan - Mar., 1992): 1-8.

century BCE (138-125 BCE) and wrote a brief report on Kashmir, does attest to the region but contains no information on trading activity. The two later reports, by the monk Faxian (active c. 399-417) and the pilgrim Xuanzang (602-664), provide first hand and detailed reports of cities, ports and routes in India. Fa-hsien takes a merchant ship to reach Sarandip and comments that "merchants of different countries resort here to trade."[17] Taken collectively, these reports clearly substantiate the nature of the trade (they mention specific goods produced) as well as the existence of settlements in Sarandip.

The one conspicuous silence in these accounts from the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries is on the presence of any Arab communities outside of Arabia. This is notable because it contradicts one aspect of the dominant "merchant" narrative, which posits a prolonged "pre-Islamic" encounter between Arab sea-faring communities and the trading sites in coastal India, or beyond. Still, the sources being as scant as they are, we can neither make any categorical statement, nor assume from silence, an absence.

The arrival of Islam in the seventh century further shrouds the activities of these Indian Ocean networks. As we jump ahead to the ninth century, we hear again of ships from China rountinely sailing in the Red Sea, and Arab dhows, a common presence in the Malay islands.[18] An intriguing description of the sea trade, with descriptions of routes, sites and communities, survives in the anonymous *Akhbār al-Ṣin wa'l-Hind*, dated from mid-ninth century:

17. Samuel Beal, *Travels of Fah-Hian and Sung-Yun: Buddhist Pilgrims from China to India (400 A.D. and 518 A.D)* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1996), 155.

18. See Michael Flecker, "A Ninth-Century AD Arab or Indian Shipwreck in Indonesia: First Evidence for Direct Trade with China," *World Archaeology*, 32, no. 3 (Feb. 2001), 335-354.

> As for the places which they reach they relate that most of the Chinese boats are loaded at Sirāf and that the goods are carried to Sirāf from Basra, Oman and other ports...Then from there the boats set sail for al-Hind destined for Kulam Malay, and the journey from Muscat to Kulam Malay (Quilon, Kerala), with moderate winds, is one month. At Kulam Malay, there is a military post belonging to the land of Kulam Malay where taxes are collected from the Chinese boats. From the Chinese one thousand dirhams are collected, and from the other boats between ten and twenty dinārs...Then the boats set sail for the Sea of Harkand. After crossing it they reach a place called Lanjabālūs (Nicobar Islands). Its inhabitants do not understand Arabic nor any of the languages which the merchants know...they carry on commercial transactions by signs, exchanging things by hand.
> Then the boats set sail for a place called Kalāhbār (Kedah, Malaysia). Here the sailors store water from sweet-water wells. The distance between Kulam Malay and Kalāh is not much: from Harkand to Kalahbār is one month's journey. Then the boats sail for a place called Tiyūmah which has sweet water for any desiring it, and the journey is of ten days. Then the boats set sail for a place called Kanduranja for ten days... Then the boats set sail for a place called Sanf, a journey of ten days. It has sweet water and here is acquired Sanfī aloes-wood. After storing sweet water from there, the sailors sail for a place called Sanf Falaū, an island in the sea, and the journey is of ten days. It has sweet water. Then the boats sail for a sea called Ṣankhā on the way to the Gates of China.[19]

2.1.3 Wonder of India

The briefest sketch of trade relations and maritime contact between India and Rome (both categories in flux through centuries), taken above, should bring into stark relief the silences in historical record. These silences do not necessarily lead us to conclude absences, but they do complicate the assumptions

19. S. Maqbul Ahmad, *Arabic Classical Accounts of India and China* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1989), 38-40

that undergird conventional histories of Islam's arrival in India. Within the context of Europe's imagination of the East, these silences go hand-in-hand with the constructions of the Orient, from the earliest periods. Before we turn our attention to Arabia, we need to linger on the conceptions of "India" in the Classical Greek and Roman imagination - the after-effects of which will be evident in later Arab historiography. We already noted that notwithstanding the archeological and historical evidence that the trade with India was primarily in bulk and staple products, the classical sources maintained a fascination with luxury goods emerging from India. As direct linkages between India and Rome/Constantinople dwindled, such accounts - based on sparse reports and old histories - overtook the realities as they may have been, constructing fantastic visions of the wonders of India.[20]

India as a land of marvels emerges from the earliest sources, which in turn influences the bulk of future accounts. The fifth century BCE treatise on India by Ctesias of Cnidus and the fourth century BCE Megasthenes's *Indica* both fall into this category. Ctesias was reported to have been a phsyician with the court of Artaxerxes Mnemon of Persia, while Megasthenes travelled to India with Alexander. These texts, compiled from later accounts, provide geographical details peppered with fabulous reports of a land populated with animals of great size (ants, scorpions and crabs); of people without heads, and with eyes on their shoulders; of men who have faces like dogs; and other men who have no nostrils and a single eye in the forehead.[21] Megasthenes'

20. See Grant Parker, "*Ex Oriente Luxuria*: Indian Commodities and Roman Experience," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 45, no. 1, (2002): 40-95.

21. See J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Ktesias the Knidian* (London: Trübner & Co., 1882) and J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*

marvels of India were reproduced and augmented in Pliny's *Historia naturalis* (Natural History), finished in 77 CE and in Solinus' *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* (Collection of Remarkable Facts) written in the third century. India, in these accounts, retained its preeminence as a land of great wealth and wonder. Here, for example, is Pliny's description of gold-hoarding ants commonly found in India, containing a sliver of a description of the land's inhabitants':

> The horns of the Indian ant were miraculously fixed up in the temple of Hercules at Erythrae. These ants dig gold from holes underground in the country of the Northern India, who are called Dardae. They are of the color of cats and of the size of Egyptian wolves. The gold which they dig up in winter the Indians steal in summer when the violence of the heat has compelled the ants to bury themselves in the ground. But the ants, being roused by the smell of the robbers, rush out of their holes, and overtaking the fugitives, as they frequently do, though these are mounted on the swiftest of camels, they tear them to pieces, so great is the speed and the ferocity of these animals and withal their love of gold.[22]

These collections of stories - all bizarre, extraordinary, and marvelous - defined India as frontier, at the edge of the known world overflowing with riches and the supernatural. In spite of the fact that some, like Strabo (b. 63 BCE), questioned the validity of these tales, such stories continued to dominate the Roman imagination regarding India.[23]

A later example, from the fourth century, exemplifies the continuation of

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(London: Trübner & Co., 1877).

22. J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as described in Classical Literature,* (London: A. Constable & Co., 1901), 112.

23. For an excellent overview, see Rudolf Wittkower, "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* 5 (1942): 159-97.

such narratives. The apocryphal *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle,* oft-cited in the Alexanderian romances and histories, provides a deeper glimpse into the popular conceptions of India in the fourth century. The *Letter,* purportedly written from the point of view of Alexander gives an account of his travels and tribulations in India during his pursuit of Porus' army. It depicts an India that simultaneously holds great wealth and great wisdom - challenging Alexander to possess both. In this section, he describes entering the royal city:

> After that we entered the royal city of Porus with our weapons. And we saw his hall and his royal quarters. There were golden columns, very great, and mighty, and firm, which were enormously large and tall, of which we counted a tally of four hundred. The walls were also golden, sheathed with gold plates the thickness of a finger. When I wished to see things more keenly and went further, I saw a golden vineyard, mighty and firm, and its branches hung about the columns. And I was greatly amazed at that. The leaves of the vineyard were of gold, and its tendrils and fruits were of crystal and emerald, and jewels hung among the crystal. His bedrooms and his main chambers were all most highly embellished with precious stones, the gem-stones unions and carbuncles. On the outside they were wrought in ivory, wonderfully white and fair, and posts of cypress and laurel supported them on the outside, and twisted golden props stood within, and there were countless hoards of gold inside and out, and they were manifold and of various kinds. And many jewelled vessels and crystal drinking-cups and golden pitchers were brought forth there. Seldom did we find any silver there.[24]

While the *Letter* exults in such descriptions of riches, it also shows a greater emphasis on India as a place of wisdom and knowledge. The logical extension of India as a site of immense wealth and immense wisdom is the emergence,

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24. Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Mansucript* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), 229.

in medieval accounts, of descriptions of Paradise which place it "in or beyond" India, "in the desert, impassable for people, in the oriental zone."[25] Such linkages prospered into other supernatural geographies - as in the thirteenth century long poem *L'image du monde* or the Hereford Mappa Mundi, as well as in the development of the rich mythography of Prester John. India, established thusly by Greek and Roman sources, remained ossified in the medieval European mind as the "fantastic realized beyond the horizons of the everyday world."[26]

We will continue these themes of frontier-spaces, of trade and of India as the exotic in our discussion of the Arabic materials, and examine pre-Islamic and early Islamic perceptions of India, as well as the history of the conquests, themselves.

2.2 The Idea of al-Hind

As we approach the age of Islam in Arabia, the issues of trade, navigation, knowledge and access to the Indian Ocean arc become intimately tied to our understandings of the society and worldview into which Muhammad was born and where he declared the first Muslim state.

The traditional view, promoted from both within early Islamic and later medieval traditions, remains that Mecca, in the late 6th century, was an outpost

25. See Natalie Lozovsky, *The Earth is Our Book: Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400-1000* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000)

26. G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, *Exoticism in the Enlightenment,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 15.

on a caravan trade circuit that stretched from Aden to Petra. This land route was an extension of the rejuvenated trade in luxury goods that had existed in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The riches and authority generated from this trade positioned Muhammad's tribe of al-Quraysh into a uniquely dominant position in Arabia. The debates regarding the existence of the "Meccan Trade" need not detain us except to note whether the evidence presented above on maritime trade, holds for the sixth and seventh centuries.[27] We can safely surmise that even with the decline of Rome's trade with the East, the Sasanian trade networks in the Arabian and Persian Gulf persisted throughout the fifth and sixth centuries. The archeological finds in Siraf, Hadramawt and other coastal ports in Yemen and Oman have consistently shown trading activity from the last half of the sixth century. It is clear that the peninsular Arab tribes and cities were engaged in translocal trade.

2.2.1 Al-Hind in the Muslim sources

Tracing the land attached to the word "al-Hind" through pre-Islamic and early Islamic sources is an exercise in conjecture. The impulse, in which I will indulge momentarily, is to try and reach further and further into the past - to Greek and Roman sources, to Babylonia, to Assyria, to the Rgveda, etc. But it is the very imprecise nature of the terms themselves that makes such an exercise conjectural. In fact, the persistence of a term masks greater divergence in meaning and in usage. As we continue through medieval and

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27. On Mecca's role in the trading networks see Fred M. Donner, "Mecca's Food Supplies and Muhammad's Boycott," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 20, no. 3, (Oct. 1977), and Mahmood Ibrahim, "Social and Economic Conditions in Pre-Islamic Mecca," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 14, no. 3 (Aug. 1982). The contrary points raised by Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987) were developed and considered in Gene W. Heck, "Arabia without Spices: An Alternate Hypothesis," *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 123, no. 3 (Jul. - Sep. 2003).

modern scholarship, such imprecise terms become categorical, either further distancing us from their historical usages or forcing us to read them back into history. André Wink, for example, states in the preface to his three volume study *al-Hind*:

> 'India' or *al-Hind*, throughout the medieval period, was an Arab or Muslim conception. The Arabs, like the Greeks, adopted a pre-existing Persian term, but they were the first to extend its application to the entire Indianized region from Sind and Makran to the Indonesian Archipelago and mainland Southwest Asia. It therefore appears to us as if the Indians or Hindus acquired a collective identity in interaction with Islam.[28]

This rather generous assessment from Wink highlights one of the key issues in the discussion of the idea of India - that India (or Hindu or Hinduism) is a construction imposed from the outside.[29] Wink's twin claims - that Arab geographers extended the meaning of al-Hind to cover the sub-continent and that Hindus acquired a collective identity through their interactions with Islam - take as a given that "al-Hind" had a clear and concrete meaning to Arab geographers that remained unchanged from the sixth to the eleventh century. It also fails to take note that "Arab" is not a monolithic, pre determined category, either. From the Umayyad era, there was a tremendous influx of administrative and intellectual immigration from Persianate regions. While the sources, for earliest Islam, were all written in Arabic, they authors were often of Persian descent. This means that, for these earliest phases, we

28. André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Muslim World*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Oxford University Press., 1990), 5.

29. This construction of the "Other" is usually blamed on the British colonial period but arguments have been made to point towards Muslim rule in India as well. See David Lorenzen, "Who Invented Hinduism?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41, no. 4 (Oct. 1999):630-659 for a good discussion of the historical as well as historiographical issues involved. Also, Arvind Sharma, "On Hindu, Hindustān, Hinduism and Hindutva," *Numen* 49, no. 1 (2002): 1-36.

have to remain vigilant when taking "Arab" as a self-descriptive category. Similarly, as I begin to trace the usage and understanding of words associated with India in Arabic texts from late antiquity, it will become clear that the mental maps associated with al-Hind were also constantly shifting in the earliest periods of Islam and, perhaps, until much later.

In classical Arabic, there were two clear usages of "al-Hind" (and related words based on the h-n-d stem: *mūhind, mūhindāh, hindi, hindūvani*) - Hind as a proper, feminine name and "al-Hindi" denoting products originating from regions of "al-Hind." The most famous example is Hind b. 'Utbah, the wife of Abū Sufyān, mother of Mu'āwiya (founder of the Umayyad dynasty), but one also reads about Hind al-Hunūd (Hind of the Hinds) who founded the fifth century central Arabian kingdom of Kindah.[30] In pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, Hind often appears as a name for a woman of exceptional beauty and desirability who is the object of the poet's affection - a famous example being in the Imruāl Qays' poem-cycle, contained in the *Mu'allaqāt.*[31] The second dominant usage comes with products labeled as being "from al-Hind" - mostly swords: *sāif al-hindi, sāif hindvani* - but also metal, camphor, sandalwood (*'ūd al-Hind*), musk, zanjabil, silk and other spices. However, that the products are termed "from al-Hind" provides no guarantee that they can be shown to correspond as originating from the subcontinent. Rather merchandise that could have origins elsewhere - silk (China), camphor (Malay), metal

30. See Nabia Abbott, "Pre-Islamic Arab Queens," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures,* 58, no. 1. (Jan. 1941): 1-22.

31. See Nada 'Abd al-Raḥmān Yūsuf al-Shāyi'. *Mu'jam Alfāẓ al-ḥayāh al-Ijtimā'īyah fi Dawāwīn Shu'arā' al-Mu'allaqāt al-'Ashr* [Compendium of Words from the Collection of Poets in the Collective] (Beirut: Maktab Lebanon., 1991), 313-314

(Aksumite Ethiopia) are all tagged as "Hindi."

Tracing the arrival of the word itself into Arabic is also conjectural. Scholars generally agree that al-Hind (as a geographical construct) most probably entered Arabic via Sassanid usage of *sindhu*. This word, which is considered to be the "local" word for the river Indus, has deeper roots - a Babylonian list includes a reference to "muslin - the Indian cloth - called *śadin*."[32] In Assyrian sources, as well, we find references to *šindhu* (šinṭu) referring, perhaps, to the the river Indus or to the sea off the coast of Aden.[33] Conjecture regarding the "local name of Indus" is perhaps the shakiest - *sindhu* in Sanskrit can be any streams, river, or ocean.[34]

Let us turn from etymological traces to the various categories of usage of "al-Hind" in Arabic. In general, there are three distinct archives within which we can trace knowledge on al-Hind in Arabia, from roughly the sixth through the tenth century - basically the period immediately prior to and after the expansion of Islam. The first archive is the Qur'an and the Hadīth - the Qur'anic text is often dated back to the seventh century, while the body of accumulated traditions are generally dated as late as the 9th century. The

32. A. H. Sayce. *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religion of the Ancient Babylonians* (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1888), 138.

33. See W. Muss-Arnolt, "On Semitic Words in Greek and Latin," *Transactions of the American Philological Associations (1869-1896)* 23 (1892).

34. There exist raging debates on the identity of the mythic river Sarasvati (and whether or not it was the Indus) among the Hindutva supporters wishing a particularly Indo-Aryan root to the Indus Civilization. To get a sense of the etymological debate, see Michael Witzel, "Substrate Languages in Old Indo-Aryan (Rgvedic, Middle and Late Vedic)," *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 5, no. 1 (Aug., 1999): 1-67. On the historigraphical and political debates, see the laudable, Irfan Habib, "Imaging River Sarasvati: A Defence of Commonsense," *Social Scientist,* 29, no. 1/2, (Jan. - Feb. 2001): 46-74.

second archive is the body of literature known as *'ajāib al-Hind* (marvels of India), from the ninth and tenth centuries. The third archive is from the Arab geographers of the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. Finally, we will turn to the conquest narratives, the *futūh*, written primarily from the middle of the ninth century to the eleventh.

2.2.2 al-Hind in Qur'an and Hadīth

In addition to Arabic poetry and stray epigraphical or external references, our main sources for information about pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia are the Qur'an, the compiled *sīra* (accounts of the life of the Prophet) and the *hadīth* (traditions of the words and deeds of the Prophet) literature. A survey of these sources is essential if we intend to understand the development of India as a geographical or mental construction. The Qur'an contains no mention of al-Hind, as a region or as an adjectival construct. Some scholars have extended claims for the presence of "Indian words" in the Qur'an, thereby arguing for an awareness of India in the Qur'anic imaginary.[35] However, this is certainly another instance of Indian originary narratives since medieval Arabic lexicographers never identified such words (the terms for musk, ginger and camphor) with India/Sanskrit.[36]

The *sira* does contain a few scattered mention of *Rijal al-Hind* (men of al-

35. See Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, *Arab o Hind kay Ta'alluqat* (Karachi: Karim Sons Publications, 1972).

36. See A. Rippen, "Ibn 'Abbās's Al-lughāt fi'l Qur'ān," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studie,s* 44, no. 1(1981): 15-25

Hind)- though without any sense of actual geography attached.[37]

The six classical compilations of hadīth do contain limited references to al-Hind as a geographical space, which we will explore briefly. The first is the denotation of a people "of or from al-Hind." There are scattered mention of the tribe of al-Zuṭṭ, a people associated in the literature as having Indian descent. Arab geographers consistently identify al-Zuṭṭ with the regions of Sīstan and Makrān, but such an identification is not beyond doubt. Earlier scholarship placed the al-Zuṭṭ in western India, Malay, or Somalia.[38] More recently, the al-Zuṭṭ are thought to be "northwestern Indian people, the Jhāts, members of whom were brought into the Persian Gulf region in the first Islamic centuries and possibly earlier" which would mean that these references in the traditions provide us with our strongest geographical and ethnographic linkage between al-Hind and the subcontinent.[39] An example is this tradition from the compilation of al-Bukhārī (d. 870), quoting Muhammad during his *mirāj* (night of Ascension to Heaven): "Narrated Abdallah ibn Umar: The Prophet said, I saw Moses, Jesus and Abraham. Jesus was of red complexion, curly hair and a broad chest. Moses was of brown complexion, straight hair and tall stature as if he was from the people of al-Zuṭṭ."[40]

In another version of this same tradition, Moses is referred to as having the

37. *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* 2, 93, 594.

38. See R. A. S. Macalister, *The Language of the Nawar or Zutt the Nomad Smiths of Palestine.* (London: GLS Monograph, 1914).

39. C. E. Bosworth. "Zuṭṭ," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*

40. *Sāhīh Bukhārī*, 4, no. 648.

complexion akin to the people of al-Hind.[41] In histories, the great chronicler al-Ṭabarī mentions the Zuṭṭ (and Sabābijah) as tribes who had settled around Bahrain and who rose up in rebellion after the death of the Prophet.[42] Another reference comes from the historian al-Balādhurī, who narrates that the Zuṭṭ were tribes aligned with the Sasanian empire and fell prisoner to the Arabs during the first raids of Muslim forces.[43]

The second category of information related to al-Hind as a geographical entity in the collections of hādith are descriptions of *thughūr al-Hind* (frontier of al-Hind). In these traditions, al-Hind is the stage for the battle between good and evil - between *dajjāl* (the anti-Christ in Christian eschatology) and the Muslims, at the end of time. An example is this oft-reproduced tradition: "The Prophet proclaimed that two groups from my 'ummah will be protected from the fires of Hell. One is the group who will fight in the frontier of al-Hind and the other group with will stay with 'Isa b. Maryam (Jesus Christ)."[44] This tradition is a key connection between al-Hind and the apocalyptically themed traditions prevalent during the 'Umayyad period on the coming of *dajjāl* and the discovery of Jesus' second coming.[45] However, al-Hind is not a central focus of the apocalyptically themed traditions - their

41. *ibid.,* volume 4, book 55, Number 712.

42. See Fred M. Donner, *The History of al-Ṭabarī,* X (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p 137.

43. See Khalil 'Athamina, "Non-Arab Regiments and Private Militas during the Umayyād Period," *Arabica* 45, no. 3 (1998):347-378

44. Sunan Nasai, *Bab Ghazwat al-Hind*

45. On al-Dājjal and Christ in Muslim eschatology, see Neal Robinson, "Antichrist," *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān.*

attention is towards the frontier of Rome. *Kitab al-Fitan*, the compendium of eschatological traditions by Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād (d. 844), for example, gives the frontier of al-Hind only scant attention. In a relatively short section entitled *Ghāzwāt al-Hind* (battles in al-Hind), Nu'aym recounts traditions which collectively tie the conquest of al-Hind, and the capture and manumission of its Kings to the end of times. Explicitly, the conquest of al-Hind will the penultimate step, after which, both *'Isa b. Maryam* (Jesus) and *dajjāl* will finally emerge. Hence, one tradition sends an army to al-Hind who conquer the land and gather the treasures of al-Hind. From these treasure, jewels are chosen for the *Bait ul Māqdis*, in Jerusalem. This is the victory which heralds the arrival of the *al-Dajjāl*. Another tradition reported by Nu'aym presents the prophecy of the Prophet that Jesus will arrive after the conquest of al-Hind and the captivity of the kings of al-Hind. An explicit link is made in the last tradition reported by Nu'aym: "It is narrated by al-Wālid who received it from Sūfy'an bin 'Umar who received it from the Prophet: He said, "From my 'umma, someone will conquer al-Hind in the name of Allah and put the kings of al-Hind in chains. Allah will forgive them, and they will roam and explore Syria and they will find 'Isa b. Maryam in Syria.[46]

It should be noted that al-Hind as a frontier of conquest received very little attention from either the traditionists or the geographers. It is Constantinople - the capital of Byzantium - which held their attention.[47] Similarly, al-Hind in the eschatological traditions, is either an outlier or an after-thought. Even when compared with other accounts of al-Dajjāl, these al-Hind traditions

46. Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, *Kitāb al-Fitan* (Mecca: Maktabah al-Tājar'iāh, 1991), 252-3.

47. See David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic,* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002)

seem to flip the perceived consensus on locating the anti-Christ as well as inverting the seekers. Furthermore, their scarcity also points to their relative insignificance in the grand scheme of the Muslim apocalyptic. However, such accounts of al-Hind as a frontier do present direct evidence that in the Arab imagination of the ninth century the conquered regions held a marginal, contested space.

There are two additional, though minor, themes present in the Traditions that provide links between al-Hind and the early Muslim community. The first is the mention of the *jinn* (spirit) from al-Hind who were early converts. *Jinnāt* or *jinn* are mentioned in Qur'an as "beings" created by God who inhabit spaces outside of cities and settlements.[48] The traditions concerning visitations to the Prophet by *jinn* from al-Hind and their conversion are oft-reproduced in popular compendiums in South Asia. One example is from al-Tirmidhī:

> It is narrated by 'Abdallāh b. Masūd that one night the Prophet took me towards the entrance of Mecca and drew a circle on the ground and asked me to stay inside the circle; that some people will come near me but do not speak to them. After instructing me, the Prophet went away and I stayed inside the circle. Some men, who in their body and their hair, looked like the Zuṭṭ came near me. They did not have any genitals nor any coverings. They kept trying to come near me but stayed outside of the circle and they went back to the Prophet.[49]

48. See "Jinn" *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān*

49. *Jāmi al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 2.

2.2.3 'Ajāib al-Hind: Exotic India

The connection between *jinnāt* and al-Hind leads us to the second archive of early Muslim knowledge of al-Hind - the genre of literature termed *'ajāib al-Hind* (marvels of India), which connects back to the material we examined from early Greek and Roman sources. Beginning in the mid-ninth century, we have accounts that place al-Hind as a land of *'ajāib wa ghar'āib* (wonders and miracles), and such accounts become part of the corpus from which geographers and historians draw upon for their works, as well. Perhaps the most familiar example of the *'ajāib wa ghar'āib* genre is the *Alf Layla wa Layla* (Thousand and One Nights) which sets al-Hind as an exotic locale whence *jinn* constantly appear and to where our heroes (such as Sindbad) have to constantly return. The *'ajaib wa ghar'āib* genre is a vast one encompassing travel, supernatural, and even Qur'anic exegesis. It is often understood as the literature of "wonder" and "marvel."[50] The texts in this genre deal with three distinct categories: the miracles and marvels of God and His creations, the supernatural deeds and beings existing outside the realm of the known world, and rare and noteworthy phenomena. Some of the key texts in this genre are al-Gharnātī's *Tuhfāt al-Albāb* (Gifts of Openings), al-Qazwīnī's *'Ajāib al-Makhlūkāt wa Gharāib al-Mawjudāt* (Marvels of Creatures and Miracles of Things), al-Dimashqī's *Nukhbat al-dahr fi 'ajāib al-barr wa'l bahr* (A Cosmography of the Wonders of the Land and Sea), and al-Kisā'i's *Kitāb Ajāib al-Malakūt* (Wonderous Manuscript).

50. C. E. Dubler, " 'Adjā'ib," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition.*

Akhbār aṣ-Ṣin wa'l-Hind (Reports on China and India), compiled around 851, and *'Ajāib al-Hind* written around 1000 are two of the earliest and most influential texts in this genre that deal specifically with al-Hind. S. Maqbul Ahmad, in his *Arab Classical Accounts of India and China*, calls *Akhbār aṣ-Ṣin wa'l-Hind*, "a collection of several reports prepared between A.D. 800 and A.D. 851" about which, "there is little doubt however that it is the earliest and the most authentic account of India and China in Arabic Literature."[51]

The Indian Ocean world that emerges in *Akhbār* is populated largely by naked men and women, greatly skilled in certain crafts, and living amid various riches (largely silver and precious gemstones) and wondrous beasts. In parts, there are direct echoes of earlier Greek accounts. In other parts, the accounts certainly seem to have originated from merchants and sailors of the period. The *Akhbār*, the earliest source, is particularly notable for combining close descriptions of sea routes stretching from Oman to China with accounts of cannibals, giant crabs and magical beasts. In fact, we can draw some explicit parallels between the classical Greek materials from Pliny through Cosmas and the fantastic depictions of al-Hind in *Akhbār*. Especially telling are the connections between the *Letters of Alexander* and *Akhbār*, the latter incorporating images and episodes from the former, leading to the inevitable conclusion that the Alexanderian myths were well-circulated in Near East in the ninth century.

For example, in the *Akhbār*'s report on India, we read about an island where ambergris grows as big as a house and that "no one can surpass the inhabi-

51. S. Maqbul Ahmad, *Arabic Classical Accounts of India and China* (Shimla, India: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1989), 8.

tants of these islands in skill to the extent that they make the chemises out of a single piece woven together with two sleeves, the two gores and the collar."[52] The *Letters* also mentions ambergris, "I wished that they would lead me to the secret weavers of precious cloth, who spun it wonderfully from a certain tree, and from its leaves and fleece, and wove and worked it into precious cloth."[53] Another explicit commonality is the description of people who wrap themselves in animal skins and have extraordinarily long lives. The depiction of giant crabs who hold onto the bottom of the sailing ships is yet another direct parallel.

While the *Akhbār* treats all the islands (Sarandip especially) as part of al-Hind, there are also some comments about the "landlocked" al-Hind. *Akhbar* reports on "Ballaharā" the great king who "loves the Arabs so intensely." There are men "with iron rings through the penis," and those who remain static for years on end. In these, and many other, descriptions of al-Hind, the fascination with the wonderous aspects of India remains unabated. There is also a deep skepticism towards the rituals and beliefs encountered, "Both the al-Ṣin and the al-Hind assert that the *al-budada* (idols) converse with them. In fact, it is their priests who talk to them."[54]

Buzūrg ibn Shahriyār's *'Ajaib al-Hind* is a late tenth/early eleventh century compilation of sea-tales, which magnifies the sparse accounts of *Akhbār.* In its depictions of hundreds of voyages with cargo, sailors, merchants and pas-

52. ibid., 34.

53. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies,* 231.

54. ibid., 52-55.

sengers (as well as stowaways) are the details of al-Hind and Sarandip populated with cannibals, sorcerers, trees that grow in human shapes, many a wild beasts and insects of giant proportion. There are islands near Malay where only women exist and who kill men by sheer sexual exhaustion. Sailors mate with monkeys, fish mate with islanders, hermaphroditic creatures frequently surface. Intriguingly, it also tells us about idols with bejeweled eyes and non-believing kings of Hindustan who allow the Muslims to offer Friday prayers.

The people of "Hind-stan" depicted in these accounts do not fare too well - as is the fate for subjects of any such imagination. They never possess a name, and belong to indeterminate groups - *mardām-i hindustan* (men of Hindustan). They have barbaric practices - drinking urine or drinking water fouled with feces, and eating rats is common - and their chief occupation seems to be either thievery, sorcery or charming animals. Only those who embrace Islam, are said to have found "wisdom." Al-Hind, in essence, emerges as a space of barbarity and its inhabitants, fantastic. This barbarous/wonderous nature of the inhabitants of al-Hind can best be illustrated with a few selections:

> Muhammad Umani told me: In Babrus(?), a city in al-Hind, I saw a young man apprehended for theft or some other crime. The King ordered that he be skinned alive. While he was being flayed, the young man didn't utter a word or cry in pain, or make any outward sign of emotion. As soon as they reached his navel, he died silently.
>
> I have been told by a person whose word I trust that: In a city in Hindustan, I saw two men commit suicide in a strange manner. They built two pits near to each other. In it they put dried dung and then each climbed in one pit and lit the dung on fire. As the fire burned their lower halves, they played a game on the draught-board between them, chewed betelnut, and sang songs showing no signs of pain, until the fire reached their hearts and they died. The

> same person mentioned: I do not know if they died the first day or whether the fire took two days to kill them.[55]

Such accounts taken together, reveal an Other that does not behave in ways that are rational, predictable or even human. The domain of rationality, of truth even (in the form of religion, at least), separates the people of al-Hind from the Muslim sailors and merchants. There is, certainly, the magical and the precious that abound in al-Hind but true enlightenment escapes them. The barbarity of the Other is illustrated primarily by their disregard for human pain; and the barbarity of their collective by their disregard for due process of law. There are numerous accounts of punishment by fire for thieves. Their reliance on magic and sorcery, is yet another distancing that the *'Ajāib* takes for granted. However, in at least one instance, the text reveals a different window on barbarity through the description of the rape of a Sindhi girl:

> One of the merchants from Siraf told me: I was travelling from Oman to Basra and on the ship was a young girl of exceptional beauty who hailed from al-Mansūra. One of the sailors would gesture to her but she kept to her quarters and he did not have a chance to force her. When the ship reached Khārek, there was a terrible storm and the ship was gripped in it. By chance I was able to cling to the rigging. Several others were able to do so as well, including the young beautiful girl and the aforementioned sailor. He tried to attack her so that he might have his pleasure but she defended herself well and forced him to keep his distance.
>
> At last, she grew tired, and the sailor gripped her and had his way. I watched this happen but in our condition, I couldn't speak to him or stop him. In any case, we could see our doom before our eyes. When night fled and the morning arrived, we saw that young

55. Buzūrg ibn Shahriyār, *'Ajaib al-Hind* (Tehran: Intisharat-e Buniyad Farhang Iran, 2000), 103, 119.

> girl had disappeared. Those who were taken by the sea outnumbered those who saved their lives with the rigging.[56]

This is one of the very few accounts in the text that does not contain any overt element of the fantastic and that, perhaps, is the reason it stands out. It appears without any explicit commentary from the narrator and provides, at the very least, a subtle refutation of the self-avowed rationality and religiosity of the Arab Muslims.

Counterpoised are the accounts of wondrous wealth, which contain more than an echo of Pliny's gold-hoarding ants:

> Someone who travelled in Hindustan told me that he had heard that the finest diamonds in the world, most precious and most clear, were found near Kashmir. In a narrow gorge between two mountains, where burns a fire day or night, through summer and winter. And in this gorge are the diamonds. The only seekers of these diamonds are inhabitants of Hindustan who do not care for their lives or their safety. In groups they approach the gorge, and after slaughtering sheep and cutting up the meat in slivers, they throw it in the gorge using a catapult of their making. They cannot enter the gorge directly because of the raging fire. In addition, around the fire are scores of snakes and scorpions who would kill them in an instant.
>
> As soon as they throw the slivers of meat, hundreds of eagles fly in and try to carry away the slivers that do not land in the fire. They follow the eagles path. Sometimes a diamond is carried away when the eagles snatch the meat and it falls off in the flight. Sometimes, the eagles try to snatch some meat that is too close to the fire and it is burned as well. Sometimes, they snatch the meat from the air before it ever touched the ground. Such is it that the diamonds are collected. Many who attempt to collect the diamonds die from the fire or from snakes. The kings of these areas are very fond of diamonds and recruit men to collect them.

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56. *ibid.,* 113-4.

> Someone who travelled in the land of Hind told me: In the district of Ankiāh, near Mānkir, there is a city of gold in which he saw a great tree which had red leaves (of rubies?). On them was written in white: There is no God but God and Muhammad is his Prophet.[57]

These images of the exotic and the barbarous in al-Hind persisted long after the Arab worldview had expanded politically over their dominion. The lack of Islam or peculiar custom kept the people of al-Hind marginalized into imaginary tropes within the histories and geographies of the Arab world. The exotic, in this case, was well within the confines of the empire - forming an internal frontier. The 'ajaib accounts have an afterlife that we will not be following. They come up subtly in the eleventh century travelogue of India by al-Biruni (973-1048), *Kitāb fi Tahqīa mā lil-Hind* (Book of Investigations in Hind). There are mentions of enchanters and sorcerers in the fourteenth century travelogue of India by Ibn Batutta (1304-77), *Tuhfat al-Nuzzar fi ghar'aib al-amsar wa-'ajaib al-asfar* (A Gift for Those Who Wish to See Wonders of Cities and Miracles of Travels), and further still in the seventeenth century travelogue of India by Mahmud Wali Balkhi (b. 1595) *Baḥr al-Asrār fi Ma'rifat al-Akhyār* (The Ocean of Secrets in the Knowledge of the Pious). The progression and propagation of the 'ajaib genre - from classical Greek through Mughal India - bears far greater scrutiny.

As Alam and Subrahmanyam note in their discussion of Balkhi, "we should caution against the view that the hierarchisation of cultures and cultural zones, or the urge to seek out the bizarre and the exotic (even in the form of the "wonders of God's creation"), were purely European inventions or mo-

57. *ibid.*, 137, 140.

nopolies, even if this need not lead us to the assert that Europeans and Asians both constructed the world of the "Orient" in the same way."[58] The persistence of these histories, of these cultural tropes, from Greek through Arabic sources, rests in the ability of narratives to skim from text to text, source to source, as episodic histories built upon one another. They are one among many strands of information about the Other - but the colonial encounter turned these traces of historical memories into hegemonic readings.

2.2.4 Bilād al-Hind

The collective body of work by the earliest Muslim geographers, produced during the 'Abbasid periods - mid ninth century though mid eleventh century, constitute the next archive for mapping al-Hind in the Muslim imagination. The Muslim chroniclers and geographers knew well, and incorporated, the Greek division of the world into seven climes. In turn, they imagined a Muslim world, divided into twenty regions, with their respective climes. The earliest Muslim centered their world with Baghdad as its geographical center - the tenth century Iraqi school of Ibn Khurdādhbih, al-Ya'qūbi, and al-Mas'ūdi being the foremost examples. There were also the later Balkhi school - al-Istakhrī and Ibn Hawqal - who situated the center far east of Baghdad. However, non-Muslim lands, in either configuration, received only spotty and sporadic attention in these cartographic endeavors. The ill-defined "al-Hind" from the pre-Islamic period was augmented by *al-Hind wa'l Sind* (Hind

58. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discovery, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 132.

and Sind) during the early phase of Islamic expansion. *Al-Sind* (the region of Sindh) typically referred specifically to the Indus river valley, and north to Kashmir, with al-Hind maintaining the more fluid, and ill-defined eastern realms.

Before a brief survey of early geographers we should, once again, note that they largely concentrate on the regions of Iraq and Khurāsān, only sometimes venturing out to Egypt and North Africa. There is a general deficiency in Muslim sources when it comes to al-Hind. Even the universal histories, such as of those al-Tabarī (d. 923) and al-Ya'qūbī (d. 897), provide little coverage of al-Hind and al-Sind. This scarcity of al-Hind in the historical and geographical texts is indicative of the lack of political and religious significance for the Arab polity in Sindh which had been established since 712. Khalid Blankinship commenting on this lack, writes that "this overwhelming geographical bias on Iraq and Khurāsān merely exemplifies a general metropolitan bias often found in ancient sources. The importance of events is only measured by their nearness to and impact on the capital city."[59] We will further develop this notion of al-Sind as a frontier region in the next chapter. Now, we turn our attention to a survey of the major geographical works from the tenth and eleventh centuries, and examine how they incorporated al-Hind and al-Sind in their works. As we go through these geographers, keep in mind that a Muslim polity had been established in Sindh for almost two hundred years. However, building upon the earlier observation about the eschatological significance of Syrian frontier, it can be re-affirmed from the geographical ac-

59. Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State: The Reign of Hishām Ibn 'Abd Al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 259.

counts that the ‘Abbasid attention was not on the frontier of Sindh - there was no Rome on the other side of Daybul.

‘Ubaydallāh bin Khurdādhbih (d. 913):

One of the earliest geographical works to survive is the *Kitāb al-Masālik wa’l-Mamālik* (Book of Roads and Kingdoms), written by Ibn Khurdādhbih around 876. He served as the Director of Post and Intelligence in the district of Jibāl, and was later, posted in Baghdad and Samarra. It is clear that Ibn Khurdādhbih did not visit al-Hind or consult directly with any one who did. Bruce Lawrence, in his discussion on Ibn Khurdādhbih agrees with V. Minorsky that, for his description of al-Sind and al-Hind, Ibn Khurdādhbih relied on the report of an anonymous emissary of Yaḥyā b. Khālid al-Barmakī (d. 805), sent to al-Hind to specifically report on religion, in 800.[60] This report has not survived except in compilations of later geographers. Ibn Khurdādhbih, in his geography, reproduces this report when he discusses the religions of al-Hind and al-Sind.

He begins by tracing the land route - with distances between stations - from the city of al-Fahraj (in Kirmān) to the Arab capital city of al-Mansūra (in al-Sind), commenting along the way on the chief mercantile exports of the towns and regions - across 980 miles, along which the “road passes through the country of al-Zuṭṭ who are the guardians of the road.”[61] He then lists

60. Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shahrastānī on the Indian Religions,* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 21.

61. Ahmad, *Arabic Classical Accounts of India and China* (1989), 3.

the following towns in the land of al-Sind, “al-Qīqān (Kalat), Banna (Bannu), Mākran (Makran), al-Mayd, al-Qandhār, Qusdār, al-Būqān, Qandablī, Fannazbūr, Armābil (Las Bela), al-Daybul, Qanbalī, Kanbāyā (Gujarat), Suhbān (Sehwan), Rāsk, al-Rur, Sāwndrā, al-Multān (Multan), Sandān (Thana near Bombay), al-Mandal, al-Baylamān, Surasḥt, al-Kayraj, Marmad, Qālī, Dahnaj and Barōs (Baroch).”[62] As one can get a rough idea, this geography of al-Sind encompasses lands from the far northwest mountain regions down to the plains of Punjab, along the river Indus and then coastal town across the Gujarat. Giving Okha, a coastal town in Gujarat as the beginning of al-Hind, Ibn-Khurdādhbih gives the following towns: “Sāml (Jodhpur), Huryun (Malwa region), Qālūn (Malwa?), and Kashmir.”[63] Again, roughly speaking, the boundaries seem to be inland regions to the east of Indus and the number of towns listed are trivial as compared to the details from al-Fārs, Sijistan and al-Sind. The reasons behind the opaqueness of al-Hind are both ideological, as discussed above, and political. The Muslims simply did not have access to kingdoms beyond al-Sind. Both of these observation, prove yet again, that the picture of a connected Muslim diaspora linking communities across the Indian Ocean rings false for the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries.

In addition to his short descriptions of the routes and cities, Ibn Khurdādhbih offers some accounts of the kings and people of al-Hind, borrowing heavily from the *ajāib* genre: they like adultery, but prohibit wine; they like elephants and possess gold; they practice magic and telepathy; they have seven castes and forty two religious sects. The section on the religions is perhaps the most

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62. *ibid.,* 4.

63. Ahmad, *Classical Accounts,* 7.

illuminating:

> The people of al-Hind are divided into seven castes: Al-Shākthariya, these are the most noble of them all. The kings belongs to them. All the other castes bow to them, while they do not bow to anyone. Al-Barāhima, they do not drink wine or any of the fermented liquors. Al-Ksatrīya, they drink up to three bowls of wine only. The al-Barāhima do not marry into them, but they marry into the al-Barāhima. Al-Shūdarīya: They are cultivators of land. Al-Bayshīya are artisans and the craftsmen. Al-Sandālya are entertainers and musicians. Their womenfolk are beautiful. Al-Dhunbīya are storytellers and entertainers and play musical instruments and games.
>
> The people of al-Hind have forty two religious sect: there are some amongst them who believe in the Creator, the Glorious and Powerful, and in the Prophets; again there are some who reject the Prophets; and there are some who reject all.[64]

There are two further notes to make on Ibn Khurdādhbih - each of which become necessarily reproduced in the works of subsequent geographers. First is the short, and praiseworthy, description of the "greatest king of al-Hind, Balharā."[65] This could be the Arabization of the title *'Vallabha-rāja* (the beloved king) which, if Ibn Khurdādhbih is reporting from the emissary's report, is conceivably the Rāshṭrakūtas king of the Deccan Govinda III (c. 793-814). A more sensible option is that this "Balharā" is as imagined a 'friendly king' as Prester John of medieval Europe. The second is the mention of Multan, a city known as *Farj Bait al-Dhahab* (Frontier with the House of Gold) - which connects us to the *futūh* literature, we will be discussing shortly. Ibn Khudrādhbih writes that the reason Multan is called as such is because Muhammad b. Qasim discovered a house which contained forty *bhār* (12,000 lbs) of gold.

64. Ahmad, *Classical Accounts*, 7.

65. Ahmad, *Classical Accounts*, 6.

Abu'l-Hasan al-Ma'sūdī (d. 957):

Unlike Ibn Khurdādhbih, al-Ma'sūdī was reported to have travelled widely - especially to al-Hind. His *Murūj ad-dahab wa ma'ādin al-jawāhir* (The Book of the Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems) contains a chapter on al-Hind and al-Sind. Al-Ma'sudi, too, makes a clear distinction between the lands of al-Hind and al-Sind. The two regions are separated by the river Mehran (Indus), have separate kings and even the languages spoken in these regions are distinct from each other. From his description of the port cities of Daybul, Mansura and the cities along the Indus river, such as Multan, al-Ma'sūdī seems to have travelled up the Indus River. Following Ibn Khurdādhbih, al-Ma'sūdi also mentions "the greatest of the kings of India in our time," Balharā. This king, al-Mas'udī states, is friendly with the Muslim rulers of Multan. Since, al-Ma'sudī is reported to have visited Multan in 915, the Rāshṭrakūta king mentioned would have been Indra III (914-22).

Like Ibn Khurdādhbih, al-Ma'sudī devotes a section to Multan, the "Frontier with the House of Gold" but with far greater detail. He claims that the idol - made of aloe-wood - is also called Multan and pilgrims come from far bearing gifts producing enormous revenue for the Muslim rulers. However, he notes that Multan is at the frontier, surrounded by kings of al-Hind who constantly try to conquer it - the Muslim rulers of Multan, at the eve of every invasion, threaten to destroy the idol, which stops the un-believers from attacking. Al-Ma'sūdī does not specify details, but we the earliest attestation of this temple comes from the seventh century account by Xuanzang who describes it as the temple of the sun-god *Aditya* with an idol made of solid gold. The antiquity

of the temple and its significance seems to have turned it into an insurance policy for the Muslim rulers.

While al-Ma'sudī's maps, distances and cities are much more detailed than those of Ibn Khurdādhbih, they still possess very little information regarding the Muslim inhabitants of al-Hind or al-Sind and even less about other citizens. Sadly al-Ma'sudī's greater work on conquests, *Kitāb Akhbār al-Zamān wa man Abādahu al-Ḥudthān min al-Umam al-Mādiya wa al-Ajyāl al-Khāliya wa al-Mamālik al-Dāthira* (The Book of the History of the Ages and the Ravages which Time had Wrought upon Past Nations, Ancient Generations and Desolate Kingdoms), reported to contain the bulk of his direct observations on India, has not survived.[66]

Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Istakhrī (d. 951):

Like al-Ma'sudī, al-Istakhrī may also have visited al-Sind. In his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik* (Book of Roads and Kingdoms), he gives us the following cities for al-Sind: "Mansurā, al-Daybul, Nirun, Kālāri, Anāri, Būlri, Mūswahi, Bhuruj, Bania, Manjatri, Sadusān, al-Ror," and for al-Hind: "Qamāhul, Qanubia, Subara, Siwistan, Simūr, Multan, Jandāwār, Bismīd."[67] As we can see, there are more unidentifiable cities, along with a general mixing up of cities for either domain. In al-Istakhrī's al-Hind, the Muslim realm adjoined the realm of the "Hindu" king Balharā - who permitted the Friday sermon in

66. Tarif Khalidi. "Mas'ūdī's Lost Works: A Reconstruction of Their Content," *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 94, No. 1 (Jan - Mar 1974):35-41.

67. Iraj Afshar, *Masālik va Mamālik* (Tehran: Anjuman-e Farhang, 1961) 147.

his land. Al-Istakhrī also notes al-Hind as a land filled with *'ajāib wa ghrāi'b* (wonders and miracles) along with, infidels and idolaters. Of particular interest to him, is the city called *Farj Bait al-Dhahab*, Multan. He also tells of the idol located in the center of the city and to which pilgrims come. The idol, al-Istakhrī notes, is seated, wearing a red garment, with only his bejeweled eyes visible. A crown of gold rests upon his head. Once again, he describes the role of the idol in thwarting the invasions of the kings of al-Hind.

Al-Istakhrī's work on al-Hind must be seen along with his pupil Abu'l-Qāsim b. 'Ali al-Naṣībī ibn Hawḳal (d. after 973). Ibn Hawḳal writes in his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik* that he met al-Istakhrī in Sind. Ibn Hawkal's list of cities for al-Hind and al-Sind is completely identical - though he claims that these are the cities he knows personally. He also mentions the adjoining king of al-Hind, Balharā, in whose kingdom the Friday sermon is read. His account of Multan is also identical to al-Istakhrī (the idol acting as a hostage for the Muslim governor included) though he adds two key details: one, that the pilgrims visiting Multan must pay a tribute to the governor and second, that the Muslim governor collects all the offerings given to the idol and redistributes a small amount back to the care-takers of the temple.

Hudūd al-'Alam:

The anonymous work *Hudūd al-'Alam* (Limits of the World), compiled in c. 982, is the final major work of early Arab geography that we will cover. It is also the last work before al-Biruni that attempts to describe al-Hind and al-Sind as distinct, adjoining territories. On "Hindi-stan," *Hudūd al-'Alam*

provides over 55 domains and towns and demarcates the western boundary as the river Indus. Malay, Qandahar, Qanauj, Multan and Kashmir are all listed as prominent sites and regions. Al-Sind, described as having the river Indus as its eastern boundary only has fourteen *shahar* (domains) listed, such as Mansurā, Daybul, and Qandabil.[68] A perusal of the small descriptions of each city in *Hudūd al-'Alam* yields scant indication of any direct, determinate knowledge of al-Hind in the greater Islamic world. The majority of the towns are introduced as having merchants in their population and the prototypical merchandise that originates from there: "Mandal, a small town in the Qāmarūn kingdom. From it comes Mandalī-aloes; Fanṣur, a large town from which comes camphor; Ballahāri, a large and populous town which produces musk; Rabīnd, a populous town where material for Indian turbans is producted."[69] There are other sites whose descriptions beg for any detail whatsoever: "Haddanjīra: a flourishing and pleasant town with a market one farsang long; Bajūna: a populous village on the edge of the desert; Kūnsar: a small town with temples; Fimā: a small town where great quantities of precious jewels are collected; Bārahara: a large and pleasant town."[70]

Hudūd al-'Alam is succeeded by Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī's (d. 1049) *Kitāb al-Hind* - the first detailed of the geography of al-Hind written in India over 300 years after the establishment of a Muslim polity. Al-Bīrunī is followed by a number of influential chroniclers of the geography and religions of In-

68. V. Minorsky, *Hudūd al-'Alam,* (1980)

69. V. Minorsky, *Ḥudūd al-'Ālam: The regions of the world* (Karachi: Indus Publications, 1980), 87-9.

70. *ibid.,* 90.

dia: Gardīzī, who died in 1060, described al-Hind's geography in *Zayn al-Akhbār*; Marvazī, who died in 1125, wrote sections on al-Hind in his *Tabā'i al-Hayawān*, al-Shahrastāni, who died in 1153, compiled information on religious sects and beliefs in al-Hind in his *Kitāb al-milal wan-nihal.*

From the above discussion, it should become apparent that the Arab geographers, whether writing after direct travel or from reports, were astoundingly lax in their comprehension of this frontier. Up until the eleventh century, al-Hind wa'l Sind as a geographical category remains fuzzy and ill-defined. In sharp contrast are the descriptions and details of Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Iran available in works by al-Ya'qūbī, Ibn Ḥawqal, etc. While central and western Asia is explicitly and thoroughly covered, al-Hind's boundaries were nebulous and its cities shifted from one domain to the other. All of the accounts rotate around the same few tropes: Al-Sind as the domain of Muslims neighboring the land of al-Hind which has many kings, all of them hostile to Islam; the sympathetic great king of kings, Balharā who remains historically constant; and the city at the frontier that holds unfathomable amounts of riches. The mere fact that the earliest report cited by the tenth century geographers is from 800 is itself a puzzling silence that brings to question how far East the Arab gaze extended and of what concern to them was the land of al-Hind and al-Sind.

So far, we have surveyed three archives that constituted Arab knowledge of al-Hind from pre-Islam to the tenth century - the Qur'an and Hadi'th, the geographers and the 'ajaib literature. Even taken collectively, they present little direct knowledge of al-Hind; and that little is mired in the fantastic. We

turn, now, to the beginnings of the Islamic empire, its push eastward and the history of the conquest of al-Sind in 712.

2.3 Futūh al-Sind

The extension of the Islamic empire east into the sub-continent must, necessarily, be contextualized within the history of Islam's earliest expansions. The battle of Badr in 624 marks the beginnings of a militaristic and expansionist aspect to the nascent *ummah* (community of believers) in Medina under the Prophet. The conflict was the result of an attempt by the *muhājirūn* (Believers who migrated from Mecca to Medina with the Prophet) and the *ansār* (inhabitants of Medina) to inflict economic and political harm to the Quraysh in Mecca by attacking their caravans. Badr was an early victory which led to two attempts by the Quraysh to end Muhammad's political life in Arabia: the battle of Uhud in 625, in which the Medina forces suffered heavily, and the unsuccessful siege of Medina in the Battle of Khandaq in 627.

Not only did the new community survive these early threats but they continued to attract new believers and make new agreements with tribes. The truce between the Meccans and the Medinans in 628 and the fall of Mecca in 630 firmly established a base from which the newly constructed Muslim armies could move outwards. In the last two years of the Prophet's life, he received emissaries from tribes across Arabia, pledging their support to the Believers even as he launched efforts against the Byzantine empire in Syria. After his death, Arabia once again plunged into momentary chaos as various

tribes with whom the Prophet had made pacts (either of mutual defense and military revenue sharing or of marriage) declared independence from Medina - not to mention the competing prophets who arose to take Muhammad's place. The *ridda* wars which followed in 632, were the first actions of the state in Medina to establish a political dominion and legitimize Muhammad's vision for the Believers.

The military campaigns quickly integrated the rebelling tribes and pushed north and west into Iraq and Syria under stalwart military commanders such as Khālid b. al-Walīd, 'Amr b 'Āṣ, Yazīd b. Abū Sufyān, Mu'āwiya b. Abū Sufyān and Abū Ubyda finally meeting at the siege of Damascus. The death of Abū Bakr in 634 and the succession of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb as Caliph galvanized the Muslim expansion.[71] By 640, nearly all of Syria and Iraq were under Muslim control.[72] By 653, Egypt, Iran and the control of the Mediterranean Sea had been established under the Muslims and the old Byzantine and Sasanian regimes were wiped away.

This first wave of expansion came to a stand-still with the assassination of the third caliph 'Uthmān b. Affān (d. 656) and the civil war between the followers of the fourth caliph 'Ali b. Abu Tālib in Medina (656-61) and the founder of the Umayyad state in Damascus, Mu'āwiya b. Abū Sufyān (661-80). The Umayyad state continued the expansionist trajectory of the Medina state by opening new fronts in North Africa and East Khurāsān. However, this

71. The accounts of Khālid b. al-Walīd's recall by 'Umar right after the fall of Damascus finds an echo in the fate of commander Muhammad b. Qasim.

72. See Fred M. Donner, *Early Islamic Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981)

new state in Damascus found itself besieged by defeats at the hands of the Byzantines as well as the second civil war in early Islam - the revolt in Medina and the killing of al-Ḥusayn b. ʻAlī b. Abū Ṭālib at Kerbala in 680 - arresting any further expansion. The reign of ʻAbd al-Malik (685-705) was largely one of entrenchment and solidification of Arab and Muslim interests in Syria, Iraq and Arabia. He focused his attention on quelling the rebels in Kufa, in Arabia, and in Khurāsān. However, under the guidance of his governor in Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī (661-714), campaigns were launched into North Africa (698). During the reign of al-Walīd I (705-15), Spain (711) and al-Sind (712) were added. This third expansion of the Muslim state came at a crucial juncture with spiraling military costs being the determining factor for new expeditions - especially the rather risky undertaking in al-Sind.[73]

Futūh Narratives

To trace this history, we turn our focus to the *futūh* ("opening," understood as conquest) narratives. Since the time of the second caliph, ʻUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, we can trace a long series of raids, and military campaigns in al-Hind and al-Sind - from coastal towns in Gujarat to the expanding eastward frontier via Khurasān, and Makrān. It would be fallacious, however, to conclude that the 712 conquest of al-Sind was the culmination of such long effort. There is a distinct history behind these raids - with diverse issues of leadership, aims and objectives. We can glimpse these particularities in the body of literature

73. See Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihad State: The Reign of Hishām Ibn ʻAbd al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

on the theme of *futūh* (conquests) - a genre which emerged out of the *sirā* (life of the Prophet), wherein the accounts of his military campaigns became the *maghāzī* accounts and laid the foundation for the development of *futūh* literature during the late first and early second century of Islam. However, the theme of *futūh* had both a historiographical and political function to play in early Islam:

> The Umayyads, who from the time of ʻAbd al-Malik (685-705) on seem to have supervised an increasingly clear articulation of the Muslim community as a distinct monotheist confession, began to encourage the recounting and collection of reports about how the conquest had been organized and how they had proceeded. Their purpose was to establish what we might call a narrative weapon to bolster their claims to hegemony over their vast non-Muslim populations, by relating the conquests' apparently miraculous successes.[74]

The *futūh* narratives served the purpose of legitimization of political authority or genealogical claims of supremacy and validation developed into a crucial source on a range of external issues: conversion, taxation, administration and, most importantly, Islam's encounter with their conquered populations. The *futūh* narratives began as testimony - from participants in the military campaigns or second hand narrators - of personal or tribal bravery and valor augmented by information about military appointments and decisions into a narrativized history of the conquest of a specific region. The genre held onto its internal motifs (letters between commanders, instructional lists etc.) even as it developed the usage of *isnād* (chains of transmission) and a divinely inspired teleology. During its development in the second and third centuries

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74. Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1998), 181.

of Islam, the *futūh* narratives also emerged as key informants for the works of geographers, the universal historians and the compilers of biographical dictionaries. The earliest extant *futūh* - such as the *Ta'rīkh futūh al-Shām* (conquest of Syria) by al-Azdī al-Baṣri (d. 810) - illustrate the regional focus as well as the narrative drive of Islam's pre-ordained eminence.

Based on the citations offered by later historians, the earliest *futūh* that dealt specifically with al-Hind and al-Sind were written by 'Alī b. Muhammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Abī Sayf Abu'l Ḥasan al-Madā'inī (752-843).[75] This early Arab historian is known to have written over 200 works, including the following on al-Hind: *Kitāb Kirmān* (Book on Kirman), *Kitāb Futūh Makrān* (Book on the Conquest of Makran), *Kitāb Ṭhughūr al-Hind* (Book on the Frontier of al-Hind) and *Kitāb Amāl al-Hind* (Book on the Governors of al-Hind).[76] However, only two of his works have survived. The three universal historians of the ninth century, al-Balādhurī (d. 892), al-Ya'kūbī (d. 905) and al-Ṭabarī (839-923), all incorporated his books into their accounts on al-Hind and cited him as the primary source. Al-Madā'ini is reported to have written his *futūh* from detailed first-hand accounts of the participants in the campaign. He is the only one of the early historians to have dealt directly with the conquest of al-Sind. The greatest amount of his material (as well as direct quotes) from al-Madā'inī appears in al-Balādhurī who is the only one of the three to have a section devoted to the conquest of al-Sind.

75. Ursula Sezgin. "al- Madā'inī" *Encyclopaedia of Islam.*

76. Bayard Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 225.

Ahmad b. Yaḥyā b. Jābir b. Dāwūd al-Balādhurī (d. 892) lived and died in Baghdad during the ninth century. The probable date for his birth is in the 810s. By birth, he was Persian and came from a scribal family (his grandfather Jābir was also employed as a scribe and a secretary), and is said to have travelled widely in Iraq and Khurasān. He studied directly with al-Madā'inī. He found work as a translator from Persian into Arabic in the courts of the Abbasid caliphs al-Wāthik (d. 847) and al-Mutawakkil (d. 861) - becoming a close confidant to al-Mutawakkil. He is the author of two of the greatest surviving works in early Arab historiography, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān* (Book of Conquest of Lands) and *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* (Genealogy of the Nobles). The conquest of al-Sind is described in his *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān,* which also carries the title of *Kitāb al-Buldān al-Kābir* (Book of Great Lands). It begins with the migration of Muhammad to Medina and describes the battles and conquests during the Prophet's lifetime. After Arabia, al-Balādhurī has chapters on the conquest of Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Spain, Persia, and at the very end, al-Sind.

Al-Balādhurī begins that chapter with, "It is reported by 'Alī b. Muhammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Abī Sayf, who said...," making it clear that al-Madā'inī is his primary source - for the entire section.[77] In the 13 page section on al-Sind (the shortest in *Futūh al-Buldān* yet longer than either al-Ṭabarī or al-Ya'kūbī), he only switches *isnād* for additional details, everything else is simply, *qālu* (They said) which continues the beginning quote from al-Madā'inī. Since neither al-Ṭabarī nor al-Ya'kūbī add anything greater to the account provided by al-Balādhurī, we will consider him as the central, earliest surviving source

77. Imam Abū'l Hasān al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān* (Beirut: Maktaba al-Hilāl, 1988) 416.

on the campaigns in al-Hind and Makran and the conquest of al-Sind.

2.3.1 Earliest Muslim Campaigns to al-Sind

Unsurprisingly, the first campaign towards al-Hind did not happen until the Muslim armies achieved control of a port. During the caliphate of 'Umar (634-44), the appointed governor of Bahrain, 'Uthmān b. Abi'l-'Ās al-Thaqafī dispatched three naval expeditions to port cities in al-Hind in 636: to Thana, near Bombay, under the command of al-Ḥakam al-Thaqafī; to Broach, in Gujarat, also under the command of al-Ḥakam; and to al-Daybul, near the delta of Indus River, under al-Mughīra.[78] We do not know the size of the expeditionary force, nor the intent. Presumably, these were nothing more than raiding parties, attempting to trace the trading networks and collect some easy booty. Whether or not they collected any, remains unmentioned by the sources. The raids provoked a sharp rebuke from the sea-shy 'Umar to the governor warning him that "O Brother of al-Thaqīf, you have put the worm on the wood. I swear, by Allah, that if they had been smitten, I would have taken the equivalent (in men) from your tribe."[79] This may have stopped the sea approaches to al-Sind but the campaigns continued eastwards through Iran - Khurāsān, Kirmān, Sīstān and Makrān.

Unlike the Byzantines in Syria, the Sassanid retreat from Iran lingered for more than a decade - continually driving the Arab armies into pursuit. By

78. See N. A. Baloch, "The Probable Date of the First Arab Expeditions to India," *Islamic Culture* 20 (1946): 250-66.

79. al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 416.

650, Yazdagird, the last of the Sasanid kings, had fled to Marw and tried to raise Kirmān and Khurāsān against the Arabs. While he was unsuccessful, the continuing struggles of the Arab armies to subdue these regions meant that they had a near-constant frontier on the East. It was during this time, during the reign of caliph 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (644-55), that an exploratory expedition was sent to the frontier of al-Hind. Ḥakim b. Jabalah al-'Abdi was dispatched, and returned to deliver this report: "O Commander of the Believers, I examined it and know it well. The caliph said, describe it. He said, The water supply is sparse; the dates are inferior; and the robbers are bold. A small army would be lost there, and a large army would starve."[80] This was enough to dissuade 'Uthmān from sending any further expeditions to al-Hind. The fall of Sīstān in 652-3, gave the Arabs a base to launch raids into eastern Afghanistan and Makran. One of which in 658, during the reign of 'Ali b. 'Abu Tālib (655-661), netted them "copious booty and slaves" from al-Kikān (Baluchistan region).[81]

The frontier of Makrān and al-Sind proved much more resilient in the decades that followed. During Mu'awiyā's regime, a number of raiding parties were defeated by the local tribes before the Arab army was able to capture Makrān in 664 and gain horses, gold and slaves from various tribes. The list of armies and commanders given by al-Balādhurī illustrates the continual pressure Mu'awiyā exerted on the eastern front: In 663-4, 'Abdallāh b. Sawwār al-'Abdi leads two expeditions to Kikān, perishing in the second. In 665,

80. *ibid.* 416-7, Francis Murgotten, *The Origins of the Islamic State* (New York: Londmans, Green & Co. 1924), 210.

81. *ibid.*, 417.

Sinān ibn Salamah reaches Makrān and establishes a fort. Sinān's conquest was short-lived, as it goes in and out of Arab control until 672 when al-Mundhir ibn al-Jarūd al-'Abdi was successful. The northernmost outpost of Arabs in the last decades of the seventh century was at Bust in southern Afghanistan. From here, Arab raids for slaves were carried into Makrān or towards Kabūl without any lasting presence. The local Zunbīls of Zamīndawar and Zābulistān, and the Kābulshāhs of Kabul were often persuaded to pay tribute but, with the lack of an Arab army, they often changed their mind, and were a ferocious opponent.[82] Additionally, the impenetrable region provided ample sanctuary to the Azāriqa Khārajites who used it as a base to launch attacks.[83]

It was during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik (685-705) that the 'Umayyad attention shifted to the eastern frontier with little Arab control over Sīstān, and the emergence of a safe haven for Khārajites and 'Alawīs (a proto-Shi'a group who advocated 'Ali's caliphate before 'Uthmān). In 694, 'Abd al-Malik appointed Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thakafī to the governorship of Iraq, which administratively included the entire eastern frontier of the 'Umayyads. Since his brutal put-down of 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr's claim to the caliphate in

82. Ibn Khurdādhbih cites a couplet from Ibn Mufarrigh which laments about the many graves that were filled with Arab fighters at Qandhār. This may refer to another tradition about Qandhār (or Kandahar in Afghanistan) that was oft-cited by 19th century Orientalists like Augustus Le Messurier and Joseph Pierre Ferrier: "In the time of al-Muqtadār (916), during the digging for the foundation of a tower in Kandahar, a subterranean cave was discovered, in which were a thousand Arab heads, all attached to the same chain, which had evidently remained in good preservation since the year 70/698, for a paper with this date upon it was found attached by a silken thread to the ears of the twenty nine most important skulls, with their proper names." Needless to say Qandhār did not have a good reputation for future conquerors. The episode in question may be 'Ubaidallāh b. Abi Bakra's attempted invasion of Afghanistan in 698. See C. E. Bosworth, "'Ubaidullāh b. Abī Bakra and the 'Army of Destruction' in Zābulistān," *Der Islam* 50, 1973, 268-83 and J. P. Ferrier, *Caravan Journey and Wanderings in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan and Beloochistan* (London: John Murray, 1856), 323.

83. See 'Khawāridj'.*Encyclopedia of Islam* The term simply means the "rebels" or "outcasts."

Mecca, 'Abd al-Malik had given Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf the power to impose his will across his domains. Immediately, Hajjāj b. Yusūf launched an effort to take out the Zunbīl strongholds and push farther into Makrān. He appointed Sa'id b. Aslam b. Zur'ah al-Kalbi to the frontier of Makran. However, when he reached the frontier, the 'Alawīs launched an attack against him, killing him in the field and capturing the frontier posts.[84] In 696, Ḥajjāj sent Muhammad b. Hārūn al-Numri as governor of Makrān. Here we encounter what will emerge in later historiography as the *casus belli* of the Arab invasion of al-Sind:

> Then al-Ḥajjāj, after the death of Mujjāh, made Muhammad b. Hārūn al-Numri the governor. During his reign, the king of *Jazirāt al-Yāqut* sent some women, born in his realm as Muslims, to al-Ḥajjāj. Their fathers were traders and had died there. The intention was to gain the favor of Ḥajjāj. The ship in which they were sailing, was captured by the people of Mīd of Daibūl on *bawārij* (barks).
>
> One of the women from Bani Yarbū cried *Ya Ḥajjāj*! (Oh Ḥajjāj) and when he heard of this, he said, *Ya Labāik* (I come). He sent a letter to Dāhir for the release of the women. He replied: "They were captured by pirates, whom I do not control." al-Ḥajjāj sent 'Ubaidullah b. Nabhān to Daibūl but he was killed.
>
> Then he wrote to Budail bin Tahfah who was in Oman and told him to go against Daibūl. But when he faced the enemy, his horse bucked and he was killed by the enemies. Some say he was killed by the Zuṭṭ of the Buddhists. They call this *Jazira* (island or peninsula), *Jazirāt al-Yāqut* (Island of Rubies)[85] because of the beauty of their women.[86]

84. *Futūh al-Buldān.*, 419.

85. The identity of this island is debatable. Ibn Khurdādhbih mentions in his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l Mamālik* Sarandip as the land of *Yāqut wa'l Mās* (rubies and diamonds) while in the *Kitāb 'Ajāib al-Hind* there is another mention of *Jabl al-Yāqut wa'l dimās* (mountain of rubies and diamonds). A more plausible theory is forwarded by S. Q. Fatimi in his article, "The Identification of Jazirat al-Yaqut," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* (1964): "I think it would be safer to consider it to be an Arabicized form of a local place-name, like *Yavakoti*, which has been placed in a Southeast Asian region, that is probably Sumatra by *Aryabhatiyan* and *Suriya-Siddhanta*."

86. *ibid.,* 419-20.

Immediately after this account, al-Balādhurī begins the narration of Muhammad b. Qasim's invasion of al-Sind - noting, most significantly, that this was done "during the time of al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik." Clearly, there is a tremendous time lag since both al-Ṭabarī and al-Ya'qūbī report that this invasion of al-Sind occurred in the Hijri year 94 (712-13). In the meantime, we know that al-Ḥajjāj continued his efforts to invade al-Sind from the eastern frontier. He urged al-Numri to move against the 'Alawīs, to partial success. In 698, he sent the governor of Sīstān, 'Ubaidallāh b. Abī Bakra to Zābulistan at the head of the doomed *Jaish al-Ṭawawīs* (army of Destruction).[87] The 'Umayyad army retreated after suffering a massive loss of troops - perhaps the reason for al-Ḥajjāj's reticence to launch further expeditions.

This piracy episode, however, dramatically reverberates in historiography and popular imagination to this day.[88] It is an incredibly potent account: a helpless Muslim maiden and her cry for help galvanizing a distant empire into a rescue mission. To the novelists, dramatists and political commentators, it provides endless permutations of history's silenced voices and the glory of Islam's heroic past. Even scholars have rather uncritically embraced this episode as the rationale for the invasion. Writes Wink, "During Hajjāj's governorship it was the 'Mīds of Debal' who kidnapped Muslim women who were traveling from Sri Lanka to Arabia, providing the occasion for the Arabs to declare the holy war on Sind and Hind."[89]

87. Clifford E. Bosworth, "'Ubaidallāh b. Abī Bakra and the 'Army of Destruction' in Zābulistān (79/698)," *Der Islam,* vol. 50 (1973): 269-273

88. See, for example, the discussion of recent case of Afiya Siddiqui in the United States in chapter 4.

89. André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Delhi: Oxford University

We will return to this episode and its position in historiography in the following chapter, but for now, let us just note that even by a conservative estimate there was at least a decade lag between the reported attack on merchant ships and the arrival of Muhammad b. Qasim's army on the shores of Indus. As we will discuss later, the invasion of al-Sind, when it happened, had more to do with the state of financial affairs of the Marwānid branch of the Umayyad, or the need to secure a frontier region against rebels, than any romantic episode of piracy.[90]

2.3.2 Muhammad b. Qasim and the conquest of al-Sind

Muhammad b. al-Qāsim bin Muhammad bin al-Ḥakam bin abu 'Ukail was born in Ta'if. We do not know the year of his birth but al-Balādhurī quotes a poet who remarks that he was seventeen when he conquered al-Sind, which would put his birth year around 694. He belonged to the powerful and influential al-Thakīf tribe. He was the grandson of the uncle of the most powerful man in the Umayyad empire, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thakafī. As such, it was at an early age (fifteen or sixteen) that he was asked to lead expeditions in Iran by al-Ḥajjāj. Little else can be established about his personal life - the details of his marriage and death will be treated subsequently.

We turn now to the full account of the conquest of al-Sind given by al-

Press, 1990), 164.

90. For a thorough treatment of the financial demands upon the Umayyads, see Khalid Yahya Blankinship, *The End of the Jihād State: The Reign of Hishām Ibn 'Abd Al-Malik and the Collapse of the Umayyads* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 47-73.

Balādhurī, both because it signifies our earliest complete reportage on this conquest and because it is the standard account reproduced in later historiography:

> Then, in the times of Al-Walīd b. ʻAbd al-Malik, al-Ḥajjāj sent Muhammad b. al-Qāsim bin Muhammad bin al-Ḥakam bin abu ʻUkail to conquer al-Sind. At the time, Muhammad was in Fārs and had command to proceed to *Rayy* with the commander of his vanguard, abu'l-Aswad Juhm b. Zuhr al-Ju'fi. But he was ordered to the frontier of al-Sind along with 6,000 troops from Syria along with other experienced troops. And he was provided with everything he might need, even threads and needles. He ordered them to stay in Shiraz until all the troops and equipments reached him. Al-Ḥajjāj gathered cotton and soaked it in aged vinegar and dried it in shades. He said, "when you reach al-Sind, vinegar is very scarce. Drench this cotton in water, then heat it and season with it." Others report that when Muhammad reached the frontier he wrote complaining of the scarcity of vinegar, and he was sent cotton dipped in vinegar.
>
> Muhammad b. al-Qāsim reached Makrān and stayed there for some days. Then he conquered *Kannazbur*. Then to *Arma'il* and conquered it. Then Muhammad b. Harun b. Zarāh met him and joined forces, but he died nearby and was buried at *Kanil*. Then Muhammad b. al-Qāsim left *Arma'il*, and with Juhm b. Zuhr al-Ju'fi arrived at *al-Daibul* on a Friday. There he received ships with men and weapons and supplies. After getting to *al-Daibul*, he constructed trenches around the troops and set up lances around the trenches and flags affixed to them. The armies were stationed under their flags. He installed a catapult known as *arus*, which took 500 men to pull. In *al-Daibul* was a great *budd*(temple) with a tall mast, and on that mast was a red flag, which covered the city when it blew with winds. And they report that the temple had a great minaret built in the midst of the city, which housed their *sanam* (images/idols). The temple was known by the name of the idols. Sometimes the idol is in the minaret - along with other things they worship. Everything they held in esteem, they consider it to be *budd*. And that is also a *budd*. And the image is also a *budd*.

Every third day, al-Ḥajjāj's letters reached Muhammad and Muham-

mad's letters with news of what he saw in front of him and his thoughts, reached al-Ḥajjāj. In a letter al-Ḥajjāj ordered Muhammad, "Install the catapult *arus*. Shorten the east-facing support. Call the operators of *arus* and ask them to aim for the mast - like the Romans - which you described to me." The mast was aimed at and broken and great distress spread through the unbelievers. Then Muhammad, attacked them after they attacked him and drove them back. He ordered ladders and men climbed them - the first being a man from the Murad of the people of Kufa. The city was conquered by force. For three days, Muhammad killed those within. The governor of Dāhir fled and the *saadni* (custodian) of their house of gods was killed. Muhammad declared it, quarters for Muslims and built a mosque and settled 4,000 men.

Muhammad b. Yahya said: It was reported to me by Mansūr b. Hātim al-Nahwi, the freed slave of the family of Khālid b. Asīd, that he saw the broken mast which was on the minaret. And that it was 'Anbasah b. Ishaq al-Dhabi, the governor of al-Sind during the caliphate of al-Mu'atisim billah (May Allah bless him) who tore down the top of the minaret and converted it into a prison. And used the stones to repair the city. He was suspended before he completed this. The governor, after him, Harūn b. 'Abi Khālid al-Marwarudhi was killed there.

They said: Muhammad b. al-Qāsim went to *al-Birūn*, whose inhabitants had sent to al-Ḥajjāj their *samani* (Buddhists) and made peace. They gave Muhammad supplies and brought him into the city and confirmed the treaty.

Muhammad conquered whichever city he passed until he reached this side of the Mehrān river where some Buddhist monks from *Sarbiadās* came to him and offered peace. He assigned a governor, and imposed *kharāj* (tax) on them and then he went to *Sihwān* and conquered it. Then he travelled to the river Mehrān and encamped in the middle of it. The news reached Dāhir who prepared to attack him. Muhammad b. al-Qāsim sent Muhammad b. Mus'ab b. Abd'l Rahmān al-Thakafī to *Sadusā* with troops on camels and donkeys. The inhabitants asked for peace and a treaty and the Buddhists worked as envoys to mediate between him and them. He gave them peace and imposed taxes on him and as insurance took some notables from them and returned to Muhammad with 4000 of the al-Zuṭṭ. He appointed a governor on *Sadusā*.

After that, Muhammad crossed Mehrān through a bridge which he built near the land of Rāsil, the king of *Kassah* of al-Hind. Dāhir thought him weak and ignored him. Muhammad and the Muslims met as he sat on an elephant and a group of elephants surrounded him and he had his retinue of Thakūrs. They fought a fierce battle the likes of which none have heard. Dāhir was forced to dismount but he kept on fighting and was killed near evening. The polytheists fell and the Muslims killed them as they pleased. The one who killed Dāhir, as reported by al-Madā'ini, was a man from Banu Kilāb, who said:

Bear witness on the day of Dāhir, the horses and spears
And Muhammad b. al-Qāsim b. Muhammad
That I scattered their rows without fear
Until I came to their great King with my sword
and left him rolled in the dirt
without pillow for his cheek

Mansūr b. Hātim reports that Dāhir and his killer have their portrait (statue) in *Barūs*. And Budail b. Tahfah has his portrait in *Kand* and his grave is in *al-Daibul*.

And reports 'Ali b. Madā'ini from Abu Muhammad al-Hindi from Abu'l Faraj: After Dāhir was killed, Muhammad b. al-Qāsim controlled the land of al-Sind. And al-Kalbi said, "The one who killed Dāhir was al-Qāsim b. Tah'labah b. Abdallah b. Hisn al-Tai." Muhammad b. al-Qāsim conquered *Rāwar* by force and there hiding was the wife of Dāhir who for fear of being captured, burned herself, all her jewels and her attendees and her possessions. Then Muhammad b. al-Qāsim went to the old *Brahmanbad* which is two *farsakhs* from *al-Mansurah*. At the time, al-Mansurah did not exist and in its place were shrubs. The defeated armies of Dāhir were in *Brahmanabad*. They fought Muhammad and he killed 8000 of them. Some say 26000. He left his lieutenant to govern there. It is now in ruins.

Muhammad continued to *al-Rūr* and *Baghrūr* when the people of *Sāwandari* asked him for peace. He gave them peace on the condition that they feed the Muslim and give them guides. The people of *Sāwandari* are Muslims today. Then he proceeded towards *Samād* and made a treaty with them like the one with *Sāwandari*. Finally, Muhammad reached *al-Rūr*. It is one of the cities of al-Sind and is on a mountain. He besieged the city and conquered it by treaty

with the condition that he would neither kill them nor enter their temple. He said, "The *budd* are like the churches of the Christians and the Jews and the fire-houses of the Magians." And he imposed *kharāj* (tax) on them and in *al-Rūr* he built a mosque. And he traveled to *al-Sikāh* - a city by the river Biyas. He conquered it. Today it is in ruins.

Then he crossed the river Biyas towards *al-Multān*. The people of *al-Multān* fought him and Zā'idah b. Umair al-Tai was glorious. The polytheists fled and entered the city and Muhammad besieged them. The supplies of the Muslims ran so low that they ate their donkeys. Until a man approached them, asking for protection. He brought them to the place where water entered the city. This water came from the river Samad and was collected in a pool like the one in al-Madina. They call it al-Balah. At Muhammad's command, it was shut off. When overpowered by thirst, they surrendered. Muhammad killed the fighters and imprisoned their women and children and the guardians of the temple who were 6000. He gathered great amounts of gold. This was collected in a building which was 10 cubits by 8. At its roof, there was an opening into which all was deposited. From this *al-Multān* was known as *Farj Bait al-Dhahab* (Frontier with the House of Gold). *Farj* is *Thughūr* (frontier). The temple of *al-Multān* was a great temple. Great gifts were brought for it, offerings were given and the people of al-Sind made pilgrimage here. They circumambulated around it and shaved their heads and beards. They claim that the *sanām* (image/idol) inside, is in the likeness of the prophet Aiyub (Job), may Allah bless him.

They say: al-Ḥajjāj calculated that he spent 60,000,000 on Muhammad b. al-Qāsim and received from him 120,000,000. He said: We have sated our rage and made 60,000,000 and the head of Dāhir in profit.

Al-Ḥajjāj died and the news reached Muhammad, who returned from *al-Multān* to *al-Rūr* and *Baghrūr* which he had conquered. He paid his men their salary and then dispatched an army towards *al-Bilamān* which did not fight and offered submission; as did the people of *Sarast*. It is at war with the people of Basrāh today and its inhabitants are the al-Mid who cross the ocean. Muhammad next reached *al-Kīraj*. Dūhar emerged and fought with him. The army was defeated and Dūhar fled. Some say, he was killed. And the people of city surrendered and at the command of Muhammad

were killed or enslaved. The poet says:

We killed Dāhir and Dūhar
The riders going from group to group.

Al-Walīd b. Abd al-Malik died and Sulaimān b. Adb al-Malik succeeded him. He appointed Sālih ibn 'Abd al-Rahman over Iraq who dispatched Yazīd b. Abi Kabshāh al-Saksaki to al-Sind. Who arrested Muhammad b. al-Qāsim and put him in chains, along with Mu'awiya b. al-Muhallab. Muhammad recited this proverb:

They wasted me, and a precious thing they wasted
On the day of struggle and defense of the frontier.

The people of al-Hind cried at his arrest and erected a statue of him in *al-Kirāj*. Sālih imprisoned him at Wāsit.

And Muhammad said:

Though I am imprisoned in Wāsit and its land
in irons, twisted
I fought many youths of Persia
And many a brave I slaughtered

And he said:

If I had decided to stay
Many a horse was prepared for battles
and mares. And the horsemen of Saksak would not have entered our land
And no Aki would rule over me
And I would not be a slave to...
Curse you, O Time, who destroys the world?

Along with the members for the family of Abu 'Akil, Sālih tortured and killed Muhammad. Al-Ḥajjāj had killed Sālih's brother, Adam, who shared the opinions of the Kharājites. Hamza b. Baīz Hanāfi said:

Gratitude, Forgiveness and generosity
Were in Muhammad b. al-Qāsim bin Muhammad
Commanding armies at the age of seventeen
How close was his command to his birth.

And further said:

He commanded at the age of seventeen
When his contemporaries were busy playing.[91]

This concludes the section in al-Balādhurī on the initial conquest of al-Sind.

91. al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān*, 420-4.

His narrative continues to explain that almost immediately after Muhammad b. Qasim's dismissal, the Muslim armies lost much of their control over the southern areas, governing only land south and west of Multān. During the caliphate of 'Umar II (717-20) there were no significant movements in al-Sind. After the death of 'Umar II, another rebel Yazīd b. al-Muhallab seized control of al-Sind and were able to hold it until 723. Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik dispatched another commander al-Junayd b. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Murrī (723-26) to al-Sind who landed in al-Daibul and embarked on a significant reconquest of the region, expanding northeast into Gujarat and southeast into Rajasthan. Al-Balādhurī recounts briefly the turmoil of al-Junayd's military conquests and the foundation of al-Mansura but makes it clear that these conquests were just as temporary as the previous ones, "Governors were dispatched to al-Sind, they fought the enemies, collected the little tribute available and suppressed the people who rebelled."[92]

Before we turn our attention, in the last section, to the surviving contemporaneous local accounts of the conquest of al-Sind, it bears highlighting some significant points from al-Balādhurī. The first point to note is how ill-fitting the piracy episode is within the overall narrative of al-Balādhurī. In its literary stylings, it is contrary to the overall *akhbār* style reporting in this section. It also seems to place the entire onus of the campaign onto Hajjāj. This further cements the inclination that the piracy episode is perhaps a deliberate construction made to dull the full import of the reasons behind this particular conquest of al-Sind: First, the need for a nascent empire to quell a frontier territory that provides safe harbor to its enemies and rebels. The

92. *ibid.,*, 427

evidence is stark in the many names of ʻAlawīs, and Kharājites who populate al-Balādhurī's account. Second, the repeated mentions of revenues and slaves harbored from the eastern front - from the earliest campaigns in Makrān, onwards. In fact, in the annals of early Islamic historiography, this account provides us with one of the very rare explicit references to cost-benefit analysis of Islamic expansion. The balance sheet of 60 million cost vs 120 million booty constructed by al-Ḥajjāj makes it clear that this was one of the primary, if not the primary, reason for this conquest. The rather strained state of Umayyad military expenditures during the reign of ʻAbd al-Malik, as detailed by Blankinship, further fortify such a reading.

The second point concerns Islam's encounter with polytheists - keeping in mind that al-Balādhurī is one of the earliest extant sources for our understanding of the placement of other faiths in Islam's cosmology. The term *al-budd* as used by al-Balādhurī to denote the local religious structure in al-Sind cannot be assumed to refer to "Buddhist." It is an Arabization of the Persian *būt* which can refer to both the image as well as the temple. Al-Balādhurī clearly states, "Everything they worship is the *budd.* The *sanam* (image) is also *budd.*"[93] The other term that appears in al-Balādhurī is *samani* which specifically does refer to Buddhists. From the accounts of seventh century Buddhist pilgrim Hieun Tsiang, we know that there were 10,000 monks and several hundred monasteries in al-Sind (Sin-Tu) of the Hīnayāna school.[94]

93. Since al-Balādhurī was himself of Persian descent and employed as a translator (from Persian into Arabic) in the Abbasid court, it is not far-fetched to imagine that he would be familiar with Sasanian terminologies.

94. Samuel Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World: Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsiang* (London: Trübner & Co., 1884) p. 272

Tsiang also identifies a temple of Pāśupata Śaivists at al-Daibul. Encountering this mixture of polytheists, al-Balādhurī's account shows no signs of Islam's reputed anxieties about idols and idolators. He uses the word *al-mushrikūn* (those who take other gods) as a descriptor but without any extra gloss. Furthermore, he twice mentions idols/images being created of Muslims - Muhammad b. Qasim and the slayer of Dāhir, Budail b. Tahfah - without any comment.

The most significant aspect, however, is the line attributed to Muhammad b. Qasim: "The *budd* are like the churches of the Christians and the Jews and the fire-houses of the Magians." What it reveals, at the very least, is that the Muslim armies recognized the sanctity of local sacred spaces. In the narrative of Muhammad b. Qasim's campaign, al-Balādhurī does not report any cases of temple desecration.[95] This is, of course, not directly equivalent to having the Buddhists/Śhivaites proclaimed as *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book) for taxation and juridical purposes, but it is a far more conciliatory gesture. The exact legal status of the local population remains unclear in al-Balādhurī's account. Muhammad b. Qasim imposes *Kharāj* (tax) on regions he takes by treaty. From the context, this appears to be based tax based on land-holdings. There is no mention of *jizya* or any *dhimmi* status for the local populations. As we move into our examination of the thirteenth century account of the conquest of al-Sind, it will be fruitful to keep in mind this rather minimal

95. There are only two cases of temple destruction noted in the entire account. The first is during the reign of 'Abbasid al-Mansūr (750-54), when commander Hishām ibn 'Amr al-Taghlabi demolished a temple and constructed a mosque in its place ("hadm al-budd wa bani modhā masjida") in *al-Qandahār* and the second account is during the caliphate of al-Mu'taṣim (813-33) when a local king of *al-Usaifān* demolishes his own temple, destroys the images and kills the priests. He later converts to Islam and builds a mosque.

treatment from the earliest Arabic sources.

The final point concerns the end of Muhammad b. Qasim and the politics of succession that al-Balādhurī only hints at. The historical background behind his recall and subsequent death needs elucidation. The Umayyad caliph, Marwān I (684-5) had wished that he would be succeeded by his two sons - first ‘Abd al-Malik and then, ‘Abd al-Aziz. ‘Abd al-Malik (685-705) decided that he wanted his sons to succeed him, al-Walīd first and Sulaymān next, rather than his brother, ‘Abd al-Aziz. This would have led to another civil war, but for the death of ‘Abd al-Aziz which ended the dispute over succession.[96] As al-Tabarī describes it, al-Ḥajjāj played a pivotal role in getting the various commanders to swear the oath of succession to al-Walīd and Sulaymān. Al-Walīd (705-715), in turn, wanted to will his son ‘Abd al-’Azīz b. al-Walīd to be the commander of the faithful. Al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf supported this as well and had received oaths from his commanders in the field that they would support ‘Abd al-’Aziz (most notably the commander in Khurāsān, Qutaybah b. Muslim). Al-Ṭabarī provides an example from the frontier of al-Sind: “According to ‘Umar - ‘Alī - Abū ‘Āṣim al-Ziyādī - al-Hilwāth al-Kalbī: We were in al-Hind with Muhammad b. Qasim. God killed Dāhir, and a letter came to us from al-Ḥajjāj [instructing us] to disavow Sulaymān. When Sulaymān had taken charge, a letter came to us from him: “Sow and till, no Syria for you.” We stayed in that land until ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-Azīz came to power. Then we returned.”[97] Al-Ḥajjāj died in 714 and al-Walīd failed to garner enough

96. See al-Tabarī, *The Zenith of the Marwanid House: The Last Years of ‘Abd Al-Malik and the Caliphate of Al-Walīd* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 108-114.

97. *ibid.,* 223.

supporters for his son's cause. After al-Walīd's death, his brother Sulaymān became the caliph.

After Sulaymān appointed Yazīd b. al-Muhallab to the governorship of Iraq and Ṣāliḥ b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān as the fiscal administrator, he is reported to have ordered to "torture and kill the family of Abū 'Aqīl" - that is, the family of al-Ḥajjāj.[98] Muhammad b. Qasim, as one of the remaining luminaries of Abū 'Aqīl, a protégé of al-Ḥajjāj and one of the commanders who had been approached to withdraw support from Sulaymān was a fairly distinct target. The orders for his removal from al-Sind, imprisonment and torture at Wāsit and subsequent death, was a fate that befell many of his tribal brethren and his commanders (Qutaybah b. Muslim, for example).

2.3.3 The View from the Inside

The earliest fleeting epigraphic reference to the Muslim conquest in al-Sind comes from the neighboring city of Broach, Gujarat, 736. It is a land grant plate which highlights the defeat of the *Tājika* by the local ruler Jayabhaṭa IV. A more detailed account emerges from the city of Navasarika in southern Gujarat where the Cālukya prince Pulakeśirāja defeated the Muslim armies on their easternmost thrust into al-Hind. The plate mentions the bestowing of great titles on Pulakeśirāja by the Cālukya king "Vallabha":

> His younger brother, absorbed in devotion to his lotus feet, is
> the eminent King Pulakeśin, Sustainer of the Peoples of the Earth.

98. al-Tabarī, *The Empire in Transition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 4.

A devotee of Maheśvara, a sovereign, his ascendency increases with each passing day. Ever since childhood, he has borne every kind of virtue. Rājalakṣmī, the goddess of royal fortune, has chosen to embrace his chest entirely of her own will. With the spread of his pure white fame, he frees the entire earth from stain.

The eminent King Vallabha, who is enamored of heroism, graciously conferred on him four more titles–"Mainstay of the South," "Gem of the Cālukya Lineage," "Earth's Beloved" and "Evictor of Those who do not Withdraw"–when the Tājika forces were defeated.

On the battle front, headless bodies formed dancing circles, moving to the piercing beat of war drums that pounded incessantly, their delight seemingly caused by one thought: "Today at last, the debt of one lifetime that we owe to our lord has been cleared with this payment of our own heads!"

The Tājikas had torn apart such renowned kings as the Saindhava, Kacchella, Saurāṣṭra, Cāvoṭaka, Maurya, and Gurjara with their piercing, brightly gleaming swords. Hurling arrows, lances, and clubs, they were eager to enter the South and conquer. From the outset, they came to subjugate the realm of Navasārikā. The tough, noisy hooves of their steeds kicked up the ground to shroud the earth with dust in all directions. Their bodies were hideous, their armor reddened with torrents of blood from innards that had burst out from the heavy bellies of great warriors who had rushed them wildly and were mangled by the blades of their spears. The best among hosts of kings had not defeated them before. Any number of champions bodies were armored with hair that bristled in the fury of their battle spirit.

These were men who attacked the Tājikas head on, giving their own heads in exchange for the extraordinary gifts and honors they accepted from their lord. They bit their pursed lips cruelly with the tips of their teeth, their turbans and honed swords reddened by a thick veil of blood that had poured from wounds in the trunks and sloping cheeks of enemy elephants, who had only the nooks and crannies of countless battlefields for a stable. Though they were mighty warriors, who sliced enemy necks like lotus stalks with a hail of arrows tipped with forged crescent blades, launched in a swift barrage to destroy their foes, they did not establish their

dominance.[99]

The mention of the previously vanquished Saindhava kings is our only reference to the earlier conquest of Muhammad b. Qasim. This plate refers either to the campaigns of al-Junayd or later. This is, however, the earliest mention of Muslims in Indian sources.[100] The reference to *Tājika* is perhaps a generalized opponent conflating central Asian tribes with the Arab armies. The two other terms *Turuṣka* and *Pārasīka* used for political outsiders in epigraphs from the eighth and ninth century seems to confirm the hypothesis.[101]

Archeological excavations in present day Banbhore and Aror have unearthed substantial artifacts, inscriptions, and coins from the Arab period. Excavations in 1958 revealed a large horde of coins, including two silver coins belonging to the reign of Abd al-Malik.[102]

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99. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum. Vol IV, part 1: Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era* No. 30, plate XXIII, 137-45. My thanks to Blake Wentworth for the translation.

100. I refer here specifically to the conquering Muslims. However, Leonard W. J. Van Der Kuijp brings to our attention the earliest mention (anywhere outside of Qur'an) of *musulmān* from a Sanskrit commentary by Avalokitavrata, dated 700, which survives in a Tibetan translation. The text, intriguingly, refers to the "traditions" of the "mu-sul-man." See Leonard W. J. Van Der Kuijp, "The Earliest Indian Reference to Muslims in a Buddhist Philosophical Text of circa 700," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* v. 34 (2006):169-202. My thanks to Sonam Kachru for drawing my attention to this article.

101. See Barjdulal Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the Other?: Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (Eighth to Fourteenth Century)* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1998)

102. See F. A. Khan, *Banbhore,* Department of Archeology in Pakistan, 1963, Muhammad Abdul Ghafur, "Fourteen Kufic Inscriptions of Banbhore, the Site of Daybul" *Pakistan Archeology,* 3 (Feb 1966): 65-90 and Pervin T. Nasir, "Coins of the Early Muslim Period from Banbhore" *Pakistan Archeology,* no. 6. (1969): 117-81.

2.3.4 Aftermath of the Conquest

The conquests of Muhammad b. Qasim proved transitory, even though later Umayyads continued their efforts to control al-Sind and generate revenue from it. In 731, al-Ḥakam b. 'Āwanā al-Kalbī was appointed governor of Sindh. He founded a city to act as the Arab base of operations at the frontier, al-Mahfūza, because "by this time all inhabitants of al-Hind had reverted back to unbelief from Islam and there were no cities safe for Muslims."[103] This provides one fleeting hint that any conversion activity that might have resulted from the earliest campaigns, was temporary and of political nature. From this new base, the Umayyads re-attempted waves of raids into the Gujarat and Rajasthan but failed to gain much foothold. The Rashtrakutas gathered strength in Gujarat and provided a bulwark against forward expansion of the Muslim frontier. After the death of al-Kalbī, Muhammad b. Qasim's son 'Amr returned to al-Sind as a governor (740-43). He was soon besieged at al-Mansūra and could barely maintain his control over the city. With the end of the 'Umayyad dynasty in 750, came the end of any further expansion east across the Indus into al-Hind.

Sindh was still the frontier, and as such, it continued to attract those who had reason to flee the center. The successor state to the Umayyad polity, the 'Abbāsid state immediately faced the revolt of Muhammad ibn 'Abdullāh An-Nafs az-Zakiyya (the pure soul) who claimed the imamate and travelled to Mansurah to gain the support of the local governor.[104] Even though al-

103. al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān*, 426.

104. al-Ṭabarī, *'Abbāsid Authority Affirmed* (vol. XXVIII), 94.

Mansūr (750-4) quickly crushed the revolt, the supporters of the pure soul continued to proliferate in al-Sind. Hārūn al-Rashīd's governor at the frontier, Yahya b. Khālid al-Barmakī stabilized the region and reported substantial revenue from al-Sind. The twin cities of Daibul and Mansūra flourished as centers of trade and commerce.[105]

By the time of al-Mu'taṣim (813-33), the 'Abbāsids had sent a long list of governors to Sindh. The period between the death of al-Mu'taṣim and the assassination of al-Mutawakil (833-61) is one of a fairly stable court in Baghdad. A large influx of *muḥaddithūn* (hadīth scholars) and traditionists made their way to the port cities in Sindh. The traffic across the Arabian Gulf to the cities of Baghdad and Cairo really flourished. Most of the accounts which we examined in the preceding chapter, were based on reportage from this period of relative stability. Pottery and coins gathered from Sāmarrā, Fustāt, Daybul, and Mansūra show that a cross-regional trade flourished during this period.[106] At the same time, the 'Abbāsids had their eyes and attention set on the Byzantine front. As conditions worsened in Baghdad with the inclusion of Turkic troops and the rise of their political clout, the regions of Sīstān, Fārs, Khurāsān and Sindh grew more and more volatile. Warlords exerted domain over nodal cities from which to launch raids onto surrounding territories. There were constant uprisings in the Makrān and Rajāstan regions and newer incursions were coming from the northwestern tribes, which resulted

105. See S. Qudratullah Fatimi, "The Twin Ports of Daybul: A Study in the Early Maritime History of Sind," in *Sind Through the Centuries* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 97-105 and F. A. Khan, "Debal and Mansura: The Historical Cities of the Early Islamic Period," *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture* vol. II, no. 1 (Jan. 1981): 103-122

106. See Henry Cousens, *The Antiquities of Sind,* (Calcutta: Archeological Survey of India, Government of India, 1925)

in the foundation of new Arab principalities, or more accurately, city-states.

The earliest is noted by al-Balādhurī is established during the time of al-Ma'mūn (809-13), when a client of Banu Samāh, Fazāl b. Mahān captured the Gujarāt port city of Sindān (near Bombay) and sent an elephant as a gift to the caliph in Baghdad.[107] Al-Balādhurī reports on only two generations of the Mahāniya who ruled the city and carried out expeditions against the coastal pirate colonies. The second to emerge were the Habāris at Mansurā. After the death of al-Mutawakkil in 847, 'Amr b. Abdulaziz Habāri declared himself ruler of the city of Mansūra and pledged allegiance to the new 'Abbāsid caliph.[108] He collected taxes and organized the flow of trade through the channels of Indus. The third main principality emerged in the city of Multān, when it was occupied by Muhammad b. Qāsim b. Munabbih Sāmi around 892. In 915, when al-Ma'sūdi travelled to Mansūra and Multān, he noted that both of these cities were governed by descendants of 'Alī b. Abu Tālib and that the khutbāh in both cities was read in the name of the 'Abbāsid caliph.[109] It is important to conceive of these cities as having a very limited influence outside of their fortifications. From al-Istakhrī and al-Ma'sūdi we know that they were in constant struggle with regional Indic principalities - even as their revenues depended on travelers and pilgrims. The little we know of these cities in the ninth and tenth century shows that they did not have much expansionist ambition. Which is perhaps one reason that they fell

107. al-Balādhurī, *Futūh*, 438.

108. al-Yaqūbi, *Tarīkh*, 299.

109. Abu al-Hasan 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdi, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Ma'ādin al-Jawāhir*. vol. 1, 99.

to the encroaching powers from the west. Also of note is that these were the only cities in the region with ethnically Arab populations - until the eleventh century - due largely to the migration and settlement traffic from the coasts of Yemen and Arabia.

West of the Indus, in the regions of Makrān and Qusdār, two principalities emerged after the Kharājite revolt in Khurāsān of Ḥamza b. Ādharak (d. 828). This region had never been secured by the capital since Ḥajjāj. Bands of warrior rebels and outlaws - the *'ayyārs* - roamed the region of Khurāsān, Sīstān and Zābulistān, extorting from populace and seeking legitimacy from the rulers. One of the key polity was established by the Saffārid brothers Ya'qūb and 'Amr b. al-Layth who threatened Baghdad itself in the 870s and were given a grant by the 'Abbāsid caliphs over Fārs and Sindh. The Saffārids took over cities like Ghazna, Qusdār, Kikān, Qandābīl, and even Multān and held them until 900.[110] They were dethroned by the Sāmānids, rivals of the Saffārids from Khurāsān, who pursued Saffārids into Makrān and took Multān during the second decade of the tenth century. By this juncture, the fracturing of the 'Abbāsids at Baghdad had eroded even the nominal connection between the frontier of Sindh and the capital of Baghdad.

The Ismā'īlī *da'wa* (summons, invitation to convert) had spread in Sindh from the Yemeni port cities during early tenth century and was followed by the emergence of Ismā'īli centers and the close relations with the Fātimids in

110. See C. E. Bosworth, "Rulers of Makrān and Qusdār in the Early Islamic Period," *The Arabs, Byzantium and Iran: Studies in Early Islamic History and Culture* (Brookfield, VT. Variorum Collected Studies Series, 1996) and M. S. Khan, "The Five Arab States in South Asia," *Hamdard Islamicus* vol. 15, no. 2 (1992): 5-28.

Egypt (909-1171).[111] By 965, the city of Multān became associated with the Fātimid court in Egypt and became a center for Ismā'īlī activities across the region.[112] Even the name of the 'Abbāsid caliph during friday sermons was replaced by Fātimid caliphs. The caliphate in Baghdad was now only a distant observer of the fringes of their eastern realm.

The roughly seventy years of campaigns extending towards al-Sind over land (and one across sea) overlap with some turbulent periods in the history of Islam's earliest expansion. However, it is important to realize that these campaigns differed in focus, in motivation and in effort. In fact, only the middle phase, that under al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf can be convincingly linked. Moreover, the episode of Muhammad b. Qasim's campaign, is itself followed by another 150 years of campaigns.

The attraction of the frontier for those who found themselves at odds with the regimes in Medina or Damascus or Baghdad, proved to be a much greater incentive for military action than any other motive. The notion of a "frontier" is paradoxically hard to configure. It represents, simultaneously, a significant distance from the metropole, an in-between region or a no-man's land, a meticulous and precise border, as well as a mental map. The *thughūr al-Hind* "frontier of al-Hind" of the Muslim sources remarked not only upon the nature of military expansion at its outermost limits but also projected a mental landscape filled with wonders (*ajāib*). Still, there were key differences between the frontier of Hind and other frontiers of the earliest Muslim im-

111. See M. Canard, "Fatimids," *Encyclopedia of Islam.*

112. For a detailed analysis of early Ismā'īlī history in Sindh, see Derryl N. Maclean, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989)

perial formations. Unlike Syria or Khurāsān - it was not a site for migration, nor for continued surveillance and neither did it have any eschatological significance. It is precisely because of these deficiencies that, once conquered, Sindh retreated from the consciousness of policy makers and history writers. The frontier-land of Sindh in Arab geographies of the ninth and tenth centuries was imprecise, indeterminate and of uncertain value to the center. As a region it resisted all attempts at centralization, was prone to rebellions and revolts, and had borders which constantly fluctuated between the local imperial formations and the global. Its emergence in the eleventh and twelfth century as the site of cyclical raiding and settlement further cements this "state of chaos" in Muslim historiography. We wait, with impatient breaths, the arrival of the stately Delhi Sultunate historians to import order on this frontier. Yet, in the regional imagination, Sindh continued to hold onto this notion of a land beset upon by empires from afar. And as local communities made their own claims on their pasts, these notions of 'frontier-ness' became a key ingredient.

CHAPTER 3

CHACHNAMA: A NEW FRONTIER HISTORY

Sukkur and Rohri are towns inhabiting marginal spaces. They exist on either edge of a great river. They carry in their popular memory episodes of transitions from one polity to another, from one invader to the next, with the only constant being that they have continued to exist across the millennia. Even at that, they consider themselves neophytes - after all, the ruins of Mohenjo-daro are barely 60 miles northeast of Rohri. Among all of the artifacts of the past scattered among the ruins, material and non-material, one is struck most by the absence of any lasting footprint of the Arabs who inhabited this space from the eighth through the eleventh centuries. Muhammad b. Qasim does enjoy a highly vaunted space in the local imaginary but there is nothing of those Arab governors who followed him, nor any sign of the caliphal intrigues from the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, nor much of the Ghaznavid invasions from the eleventh century. These later histories are hidden from view: the popular accounts telescope from the eighth century exploits of Muhammad b. Qasim to the thirteenth century Mongol invasions of Sindh during the hay day of the court of Nāsir al-Dīn Qabacha (d. 1227) at Ucḥ Sharif and thence, to the arrival of Sufi mystical orders. From Rohri, the Ayub Bridge spans the Indus and connects to Sukkur on the western edge. The bridge goes through a tear-dropped shaped island in the stream of the Indus. Bukkar, an island where one can still stand on the very walls that

provided Qabacha his last resort.[1]

In the previous chapter, we examined the conceptions of separate and distinct regions of al-Hind and al-Sind in pre-Islamic and early Islamic historiography. We looked at al-Hind in the Arab and Muslim imagination - from pre-Islamic Arab poetry to the Qur'an and Hadīth literature. We examined the works of early geographers and the 'ajaib literature to get a sense of how they organized al-Hind and al-Sind (now, Hind and Sindh) within early Muslim cosmography. Finally, we looked at the earliest surviving textual record of the conquest of Sindh by Muhammad b. Qasim.

Next, we follow the history of Muhammad b. Qasim to Ucḥ in the thirteenth century. During the first three decades of the thirteenth century, the frontier towns of Ucḥ, Mansura, Multan, on the river Indus, became nodal points connecting the movement of people, of merchandise, of ideas, and troops across Arabia, Iran and India - a movement spurred by the rise of the Mongols to the northeast. As Peter Jackson notes, "the irruption of the Mongols into the eastern Islamic world after 1220 must have considerably increased the number of adventurers - both Turks and 'Tājīks' - eager for whatever enterprise was on offer. We may imagine a veritable reservoir of unattached warriors and officials in north-western India in the 1220s. Many of 'the chief men of Khurāsān, Ghūr, and Ghazna' secured refuge in the first instance at the

1. Adjacent to it, and visible from the bridge, is a tiny piece of limestone rock, which locals call the Island of Khwaja Khizr (or Zinda Pir). Legendary tales of this peripatetic sage who guides the lost traveller are readily available from the city dwellers. There is perhaps no other geographical site that features such intertwinings of the legends of Khizr, Alexander, and lost treasure. This motif of "lost" envelopes the community of sacred sites around Bukkar. There is the tomb of the seven maidens, the island of Sadbela, ruins of mosques and ancient towns, all after-effects of some lost tale.

court of Qabacha."[2] During Qabacha's roughly twenty two years as the ruler of Sindh, claims over the city-states Multan and Lahore, oscillated between him and his main rivals, Iltutmish and Yildiz. During his reign, his court attracted notables, 'ulama, jurists, mystics and other luminaries from Iran, Iraq and Central Asia. Among them was 'Ali b. Hāmid b. Abu Bakr Kufi who arrived in Uch̥ around 1216 and wrote the first history of Muhammad b. Qasim - a self-avowed translation, from Arabic to Persian, of the history of a family which had participated in the Arab campaigns in Sindh. Other notable chroniclers of Islamicate pasts at Qabacha's court included Sayyid Badr al-Dīn 'Awfi, who came to Uch̥ in 1220 and completed his *Lubāb al-Albāb* (Essence of Wisdom) there; and Minhāj al-Dīn Sirāj al-Dīn Jūzjānī, the author of the universal history *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* (Generations of Nasir), who arrived in Uch̥ in 1226 and began his work. Along with these chroniclers, Qabacha also patronized Sufi masters - Bah'a al-Dīn Zākariā at Multan, 'Amir Kabīr Sayyid Qūtb al-Dīn Madnī at Uch̥ - and jurists - Sayyid Hāmid Sindhi and Sayyid Muhammad Bhakkar.

For nearly thirty years, at a pivotal and tumultuous time in the Muslim lands, Qabacha's frontier kingdom become a cultural and literary refuge. However, military and political defeats doomed Uch̥ from becoming, as well, the political center of a new Muslim polity in northern India. Delhi and Lahore won those battles and Uch̥ remained a frontier city and Sindh a frontier region - no longer an outpost of Baghdad, but of Delhi.

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2. Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultunate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 39.

3.1 Sindh: An Internal Frontier

In the early centuries of the second millennium, Sindh was a messy and conflicted region that continuously experienced the births and deaths of militant polities. Numerous claimants to power - both local and foreign - contested over the port-cities and revenue sources of this region. Sebūktigin was a "Turk" (akin to the category "Arab," we should be wary of what this means in the Muslim sources) general and governor of the Sāmānid polity at Ghazna (presently Afghanistan). In 962, he established himself as a nominal Sultan - retaining the claims of the Sāmānids and the 'Abbāsids as overlords - and began expansion into northern Punjab. By his death in 997, he had acquired a number of forts from the Sāhīs and extended his dominion over Ghūr and Makrān. His son, Mahmūd (d. 1030), continued his excursions into northern Punjab and Sindh - wresting control of Multān and Mansūra from the local Ismā'īlī rulers. The seasonal raids of Mahmūd in Punjab - he led over twenty campaign to northern India between 1001 and 1027 - survive in contemporary communal histories as the acts of a temple raider and destructor. He was a devout Sunni and his raids in Sindh were, at least in part, motivated by the desire to gain legitimacy from the 'Abbāsid court. Destroying the Ismā'īlī "menace" in Multān provided ample means of achieving such favors from the center.[3]

The Ghaznawvids (962-1186) were followed by Mui'zz al-Dīn Muhammad b. Sām Ghauri (d. 1206), who emerged from Herat and conquered Multān and

3. See C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994-1040* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1963).

Uch̩ in 1175, Daybul in 1182 and Lahore in 1186. With the Ghurid invasions, 'Abbāsid claims over city-states in Sindh came to an end. Ghauri continued expansion towards Delhi from Lahore and directly engaged the surrounding polities of Chawhāns, Chandellas (Bundelkhand region), Gāhadavālas (capital at Vārānasī), and Cālukyas. He suffered some setbacks: in 1188, he was defeated by Prithvīraja of the Chawhāns at Tarā'in and was forced to retreat to Ghazna. By 1192, he was permanently established near Delhi, controlling a string of forts, allowing him access over the northern Gangetic plain with his capital at Lahore. Along side his lieutenant Qutb al-Dīn Aybeg (d. 1210-11), he launched expeditions into Rajastān, Gujarat and the Deccan.

After Mui'zz al-Dīn's assassination, in 1205, Aybeg went from Delhi to Lahore and declared himself sovereign - setting up a struggle for control of Afghanistan, Punjab and Sindh with Yīldīz (Mu'izz al-Dīn's senior lieutenant) at Ghazna. The remnants of the Ghurid realm were now available to their rival, the Khawārzam Shāhi - a polity that emerged in the 1130s from the fringes of the Seljuq polity in Khurāsān - who challenged Yīldīz to the west. Aybeg's death in 1210-11 fractured the eastern frontier of Mu'izz al-Dīn's conquered realm, even further - Aybeg's *ghulām* (slave) Iltutmish was set up as a ruler in Delhi. Another *ghulām* (slave-lieutenant) 'Alī-yi Mardān became Sultan 'Alā al-Dīn in Bengal and Nāsir al-Dīn Qabacha, who was a former slave-lieutenant of Mu'izz al-Dīn and had been in stationed in Uch̩ since 1204, declared his independence and occupied Lahore. What followed was a predictably mad scramble among these warlords to lay claim to the key city-forts of Delhi, Multan, Lahore and Uch̩ between Yīldīz, Qabacha and Iltutmish. As bands of Turko-Muslim armies roamed from the hills of Peshawar to the

plains of Lahore, these Sultans rallied luminaries, intellectuals and mystics to their courts - desperately seeking legitimation of their individual and collective claims.[4] After Khawārzam Shāh forced Yīldīz out of Ghazna in 1215-16, Yīldīz took Lahore and marched on Delhi but was defeated and captured by Iltutmish at Tarā'in in 1216. The battle for northern India was now between Iltutmish in Delhi and Qabacha in Uch̤.

3.1.1 Nāsir al-Dīn Qabacha at Uch̤

As this intense tactical and military struggle to control key city-states in northern India unfolds, we look to central Asia and see that the entire Islamicate world is being pushed out by the raiding Mongols. As a result of Mongol conquests in Khurasān, the eastern-most frontier of the Islamicate world - Sindh and Punjab, became frontiers of 'last refuge'. 'Alā al-Dīn Muhammad's defeat by Chingiz Khan in 1215-18 pushed the Khawārzam Shāhis into Sindh. Jalāl al-Dīn sacked Uch̤ in 1224, after Qabacha refused to help him against Chingiz Khan, and prepared to begin his march up to Iltutmish's Delhi. However, the pursuing Chingiz Khan reached him at Uch̤ and defeated him - the first of many Islamicate polities ended by Chingiz Khan. On his way back to Iran, Chingiz Khan besieged Multān in 1224 but Qabacha was able to fend him off. However, Qabacha could not bear the strikes of both Jalāl al-Dīn and the Mongols. By 1228, Qabacha had lost all major territory to Iltutmish, including Lahore and Multān. Iltutmish finally laid siege to Uch̤ in 1228.

4. In this, they followed the practices established by the Sāmānids and the Ghaznavids. Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, for example, was written in Mahmūd Ghazna's court.

Jūzjānī's *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* is a contemporaneous account of the foundation of the Delhi Sultunate. His short biography of Qabacha is worth citing in full, as it discuses his political and military maneuverings:

> Malīk Nāsir al-Dīn Qabacha was the slave of the Highest Honor King and Sultan Ghāzi Mu'izz al-Dīn. His forsightedness, wisdom, manners, and work ethic were unparalleled. For years, he had served Sultan Mu'izz al-Dīn at every level and in every capacity. He was fully adept at all manners of warfare, courtly behavior and governance and knew of every major and minor detail of the people. When Uch̤ and Multān were grants to Nāsir al-Dīn 'Aytūm, the Sultan was involved in campaigns at Qittā.
>
> Nāsir al-Dīn fought in front of the Sultan's horse with great valor and performed jihād according to the *sunnāh.* He dispatched many unbelievers to hell. The fighters of Qittā grew weary of Nāsir al-Dīn's abundant killing and bloodshedding and decided to collectively assault him and he was martyred. Sultan Ghāzi reached Ghazna after this and granted Uch̤ to Nāsir al-Dīn Qabacha. He had two daughters of Sultan Qutb al-Dīn Aybeg were married to him. From the elder daughter he had a son, whose name was 'Ala al-Dīn Bahrām Shah. He was of beautiful features and good character but was fond of luxuries and, as is wont of the young, ill deeds.
>
> After the death of Qutb al-Dīn, Qabacha went to Uch̤ and captured Multān. He also captured Sindistan and Daybul near the shore of the sea. He took control over the kingdom of Sindh and all the towns and forts in it. He took two *chatr* (ceremonial parasols) and extended his dominion over *Tabrhindā, Kūhram* and *Sārsāti* to the East. He captured Lahore many times. Taj al-Dīn Yildiz sent an army from Ghazna, under the command of his minister Khawāja Mu'idd al-Mūlk Sinjrī who defeated him.
>
> During the invasions of the Chinese unbelievers (Mongols), his control over the land of Sindh was complete. Many notables from Khurāsān, Ghūr and Ghazna came to his court and were given high grants and gifts. There was a constant struggle between him and Sultan Sayyid Shams al-Dīn (Iltutmish). When Chingiz Khan and Jalāl al-Dīn Khawārzam Shah fought near the river Indus, Khawārzam Shah entered Sindh. He went to Daybul and Multān. After conquer-

> ing *Nandā*, the Tartari commander Tūrbi No'in came to Multān with a heavy army and surrounded it for forty days. During the siege, Qabacha opened the gates of the treasury and gave grants to all the people. His wisdom, foresightedness and bravery accomplished miracles that will be remembered until the Day of Judgment. This happened in 621 A.H. (1224 C.E.).
>
> A year and a half later, the Ghurid commanders escaped the hands of the Tartars and reached Qabacha. By the end of 623 A.H. (1226 C.E.), an army of Khīljīs (who used to be a part of the Khawārzam Shāhis) occupied Sīstān. Their leader was commander Malīk Khan Khīljī. Qabacha turned his attention to ousting them. They fought and were defeated. Malīk Khan was killed and Nasir al-Dīn was once again ruler over Multān and Uch̤.
>
> That same year, the writer of these words, Minhāj Sirāj came from Khurāsān to Ghazna to Multān and via boat to Uch̤. It was the 26th of Jamādi al-Awal of 624 A.H. (1227 C.E.). In 625 A.H. (1228 C.E), control of the madrāsa Firūzi in Uch̤ was given to the writer of these words. Along with an appointment to the army of 'Ala al-Dīn Bahrām Shah. In 625 A.H. (1228 C.E.) Sultan Sayyid Shams al-Dīn laid siege to Uch̤ and Malik Nasīr al-Dīn fled to Bhakkar. The Sultani army kept the siege for twenty seven days until the fort was occupied. When Malik Nasīr al-Dīn learned of the fall of Uch̤, he sent his son 'Ala al-Dīn Bahrām Shah to Sultan Shams al-Dīn. When he reached the army, the news of the conquest of Bhakkar was reached. Malik Nasir al-Dīn drowned in the river Indus. His life ended. Over Sindh, Uch̤ and Multan, he ruled for 22 years.[5]

While Jūzjānī's statement about a "constant struggle" between Iltutmish and Qabacha can be read to emphasize only the political and military tussle between the two claimants, it also hints at the need for legitimation felt by both of them. The gathering of luminaries at court, the grants, and the commission of histories and poetic works were attempts to situate these itinerant warlords within Islamicate history. Along with the panegyrists and histori-

5. Minhāj Sirāj Jūzjānī, *Tabaqāt-i Nāsirī* (Lahore: Markazi Urdu Board) 1, 743-4.

ans, they also tried to ally with the Sufi mystics - both Iltutmish and Qabacha try vigorously to gain favor with the great Sufi Sheikh Bah'a al-Dīn Zakāriyā in Multan. Qabacha, never having claimed Delhi, was perhaps always at a disadvantage. Jūzjānī's *Tabaqāt-i Nāsirī*, a universal history that begins with the fall of Adam to earth, is one key example of the work of legitimation undertaken by Muslim authors in the service of the slave dynasties. It was completed around 1260, long after the claims of Yildiz and Qabacha rang the walls of Multān and Lahore.

For Jūzjāni, Illtutmish completed the flow of Islamicate history. The one who unequivocally linked the frontier of al-Hind to Islam's cosmology, to the *sunnā* of the Prophet and to the traditional chronology of Islam's dynastic histories. Other major histories of the Delhi Sultunate, some of them were even attached to Qabacha's court in Uchḥ - Ḥasan-i Nizāmī's *Tāj ul-Ma'āthir* (Crown of Glories) was completed in 1217, Fakhr-i Mudabbir's *Bahr al-Ansāb* and *Ādab al-Harb wa'l Shajā'a*, 'Awfī's *Jawāmi 'al-Hikāyāt* (completed in 1231), *al-Kāmil fi'l Ta'rikh* by Ibn Athīr (d. 1232), Baranī's *Fatāwā-yi Jahāndārī* and 'Isāmī's *Futūh al-Salātīn* - also furthered this conception of Islam's past comfortably ensconced in the protective hands of these frontier Kings. These histories, biographies, advice manuals, were all consistently rooted in the Hindavi soil but had their eyes turned to the West - to Shiraz, to Baghdad, to Cairo - and their narratives did not break from the models made sacrosanct by al-Ṭabarī and al-Yaq'ubī.

3.1.2 Sindh, after Qabacha

With the establishment of the capital in Delhi, Sindh was no longer as far-flung from the centers of political power, as it had been from Baghdad, or even Ghazna. Still, the region remained a distant outpost to the Sultunate. As the roving armies settled down, Sindh's local tribes and notables and the central administrative powers in Delhi and Lahore, began a client/rebel duality that lasted well into the Mughal era. The Sumrā tribe had been a major force in southern Sindh since the early eleventh century. After Qabacha's death, they emerged as the main political power in Sīstān, in Rajastān, in Makrān. And they wrestled with the Delhi sultans for control over Indus cities such as Thatta, Mansura, Daybul, and Multan.

Alā al-Dīn Khiljī (1296-1316) mounted a number of campaigns in the region battling the Sumrā princes whose cycle of capitulation/rebellion could be charted exactly to the perceived military stress on the metropole. Yet, the Delhi Sultans and their governor rarely resorted to invading Sumrā held territories - relying, instead, on alliances with tribal elite and local power struggles. Against the Sumrās, Khiljī advanced the cause of the Lohāna tribe of Sammā. The conflict guaranteed a rolling supply of princes and tribal chiefs wanting alliances with the center. The tussle for dominance between the Sumrās and the Sammā lasted until the reign of Fīrūz Shah Tughluq (1351-1388), when the Jām emirs of Sammā were finally able to end Sumrā dominance, taking over lower Sindh.

Yet, even the Sammā were recalcitrant clients to Fīrūz Shāh's Delhi, often forming alliances with the Mongols or with the Deccan kingdoms. From

1365 to 1367, Fīrūz Shah attempted to bring the Sammā under his dominion, but he succeeded only through the intercession of the Sufi master Makhdūm Jahāhniyan. The Sammās continued their dominance over Sindh until the invasion of the Qandāhāri Arghūns in 1520.

Taken together, the Sumrā and the Sammā rule in Sindh, constitute almost four hundred years of local, regional polities - acting as an internal frontier to the Delhi Sultans. Unlike Qabacha, they succeeded in carving out a distinct sphere of influence, balancing the regional and local forces. Uc̣h, Multan and Thatta emerged as spiritual centers, though, these regimes made little overt connections to the Islamicate forms of governance or living. They maintained, instead, close ties - marital, tribal and political - with Hindu polities in the west and south of the sub-continent.

By the early sixteenth century the status quo had evaporated. A fresh wave of warlords descended from Afghanistan to re-conquer the frontiers of Sīstān, Makrān and Sindh. The governor of Qandāhār, Dhū'l Nūn Beg Arghūn, launched campaigns against the Sammās in 1479. His attempts to create a new base of operations in the highlands outside of Makrān found new urgency as Uzbek and Tatār warlords pushed down on him from the east. Chief among them was Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty in north India. In 1520, while fleeing Qandahar, Shah Beg Arghūn defeated the Sammā and established Arghūn rule in Sindh- accepting the sovereignty of Babur. The Arghūn were a short lived dynasty, and were replaced by another western Sindhi tribe - the Tarkhān, in 1591.

In a fundamental way, Sindh under the Mughals remained a frontier. The

world-context, however, was markedly different. The rise of the gunpowder empires had re-shaped Asian geographies. Sindh, in the early modern era, was a region connecting the empires of Uzbek (1500-1785), Mughal (1526-1858) and Safavid (1501-1722) empires, as well as, the colonial designs of the Dutch Indies Company (who sacked Thatta in 1555) and the East India Company (which began trading here in the 1640s). It was a trading center for both land-routes across Central Asia, as well as the Indian Ocean network connecting the ports of Thatta, Muscat and Hormuz.[6] It was with these concerns in mind, that the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542-1605) invaded Sindh in 1592. He formally incorporated Sindh into the governorship of Multan, and appointed Mughal administrators to the main centers in Sindh. However, local administration continued to remain in the hands of local nobility, most notably the Kalhōra. The eighteenth century saw both internal strife, the wars of attrition between the reigning Kalhōra and the Balūchi Talpūr, and the invasions of Nadir Shah, from Iran in 1739, and of Ahmed Shah Durrani, from Afghanistan, in 1753. The cities of Sindh still bear the scars of those invasions - at least, in popular histories. In 1783, the Talpūrs, from Baluchistan, took over the governance of the various parts of Sindh until the final invasion of the East India Company in 1843.

We will delve in greater detail into the British invasion in the next chapter. Now, after this brief political history of Sindh, let us turn our attention to the productions of the central history of Muhammad b. Qasim, written in the

6. See Muzaffar Alam, "Trade, State Policy and Regional Change: Aspects of Mughal-Uzbek Commercial Relations, C. 1550-1750," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* 37, no. 3 (1994): 202-227. And Sanjay Subhramanyam, "The Portuguese, Thatta and the external trade of Sind, 1515-1635," *Revista de Cultura,* 13-14, 48-58.

thirteenth century.

3.2 *Chachnama*

Largely unheralded in the category of early Indo-Persian historiography is one of the earliest Persian histories to be written in Hind - ‘Ali b. Hāmid b. Abu Bakr Kufi’s multi-titled, *Ta’rīkh-i Hind wa’ Fath-i Sind* or *Fathnama-i Sind* or *For Minhāj al-Dīn al-Mūlk*, famously known as the *Chachnama.* It was completed around 1216 in Uch̩ Sharif and dedicated to the son of one of Qabacha’s most powerful ministers. Unlike its contemporaries such as *Tabaqāt-i Nāsirī* or *Tāj ul-Ma’āthir, Chachnama* remains a truly unique text in its narrative form, its composition, and its function. ‘Ali Kufi claims his text to be a translation (*tarjumā*) of an early Arabic (*Hijāzi*) history (*ta’rīkh*) of the Muslim campaigns in al-Hind, leading up to the conquests by Muhammad b. Qasim. In *Chachnama*, ‘Ali Kufi produced not only a history of the Arab conquests but also a regional and local history of Sindh which did not concern itself with the universalisms of the Islamic past. Instead, it re-imagined a space for co-existance between Theists based on a shared moral axis. In this alone, *Chachnama* is an unparalleled text in the Indo-Persian historiography - though with a checkered history. It has largely been ignored in the compendiums of major texts of the Delhi Sultunate. Yet, the events narrated in *Chachnama* continue to reverberate through the pasts - fulfilling, at least, ‘Ali Kufi’s stated objective of “being written onto the pages until the ends of time.”

Nothing is known of 'Ali Kufi (b. 1158) outside of what he writes in the introduction to his text. He does not state the land of his origins, his previous habitats or the exact reason for his migration. Perhaps the Mongol upheaval was the reason for the later and, judging from his name, Iraq could be the former - *w'allah-u a'lam.* He states simply that he spent the majority of his life in leisure and comfort but due to the "accidents of life and the turning of time," he migrated to Uch̩ and found some favor with Qabacha's chief minister, 'Shārf ul Mūlk Rāzi al-Dīn Abu Bakr. In 1216, at the age of 58, he gave up all other concerns and decided to create "a book of exceptional beauty and grace." To pursue his goal, he travelled to the city of Bhakkar and al-Aror where "the descendants of Arab conquerors lived."[7]

There, he met Maulana Qazi Isma'il who was descended from the Thāqafī clan, and who possessed an Arabic (*ba lūghat-i Hijāzi*) history of the conquest of al-Sind which had been preserved in his family since generations. Upon reading the manuscript, 'Ali Kufi found it to be full of tales (*hikayāt*) of wisdom, valor and courage of Arabs and Syrians - which told of the bravery with which they conquered forts, built mosques and minarets, and governed with wisdom. It was a text, Kufi writes, that would provide a key to the "slaves" of the Prophetic world (*bandagān-i dawlūt-i Muhammad*) to govern - "slaves" being an obvious nod towards the status of commanders like Qabacha.

Hence, 'Ali Kufi claims to take upon himself, the task of 'translating' this text from Arabic into Persian. For the explicit sake of currying favor from Qabacha's court, he dedicated it to 'Ain ul Mūlk Fakh̩r al-Dīn Hus'āin, the

7. *Fathnama-i Sindh*, 7.

son of Qabacha's powerful minister. Reading his many attempts to deliver a suitably obsequious dedication, it becomes apparent that 'Ali Kufi was never guaranteed any support from the court. Unlike Jūzjānī and 'Awfi, he had no official position, nor any salary from Qabacha. 'Ali Kufi, then, wasn't writing a 'court' chronicle as Jūzjānī did - a fact that sheds important light on our own reading of his text.

3.2.1 A brief synopsis of *Chachnama*

After the authorial notes, 'Ali Kufi provides his most apt title for his work: *Kitāb-i Hikayāt-i Rai Dāhir b. Chach b. Sila'īj wa halāk shudān ou badāst-i Muhammad-i Qasim* (The Book of Stories of the King Dāhir b. Chach b. Sila'īj and his Death at the hands of Muhammad b. Qasim). *Chachnama* begins in the city of al-Arōr - the capital of Hind and Sind - and concerns the rise to power of a young, and talented Brahmin, Chach b. Sila'īj and goes on to describe: the condition at al-Arōr prior to Chach's arrival at the capital, his employment as a secretary for the King's chief minister, his affair with the young Queen and their scheme to usurp the throne of the kingdom after the death of the King; Chach's re-conquest of "the four quarters" of Sindh after acquiring the throne and his treatment of civilians and cities; the tussle between Chach's two sons Dāhir and Dāhirsena for the throne after Chach's death; the treacherous way in which Dāhir takes over al-Arōr; and finally the set-piece - the marriage of Dāhir to his own sister. All of this, constituting the first third of the *Chachnama*, has three overarching themes: the basis of legitimacy for the ruler, the good council of the advisor and the immorality

of treachery (women, brahmins, buddhists). Thus ends the Chach portion of the text.

'Ali Kufi then introduces the main focus of his text under the heading, *Tar'īkh Khūlfā-i Rashidīn ta Wālid* (A History from the Righteously Guided Caliphs to al-Wālid) - heralding a tonal shift from the previous section. The episodes which are narrated by the generic "tellers of tales and writers of histories" dwindle, and those with direct *isnād* (chains of transmission) become frequent. There is the customary - for Arabic historiography - sprinkling of Arabic poetry in the text along with explicit mentions of those who did commendable and heroic deeds.

He begins with the time of 'Umar and describes the attempts to take al-Hind. Short accounts of governors dispatched to various fronts in Makrān, Zabulistan, and Qandahar are followed by descriptions of rebellious groups fleeing to the frontier. He details the 'Alawī revolts and the amassing of troops in Sindh who were conspiring against Hajjāj. He describes the ships, bearing Muslim women and gifts, which were captured by Mid pirates and the resulting call to action by Hajjāj. The campaign of Muhammad b. Qasim towards Hind and Sindh follows, roughly, as outlined in al-Balādhuri. He continues to provide far greater information than the skeletal narrative of al-Balādhurī. Muhammad b. Qasim begins with capturing the fort of Armabil in Makran, and then lays siege to Daybul. After the conquest of Daybul, he takes the forts of Nerūn, Sīstān. The battle with Raja Dāhir occurs by the banks of the river Indus. After Dāhir's defeat, he proceeds to al-Arōr, Brahmanabad, and finally Multan.

From the taking of Daybul to Multān, Muhammad b. Qasim's campaign is a deliberate shadowing of the campaigns that Chach undertakes to the "four quarters" of Sindh - Muhammad b. Qasim even plants an Islamic flag at the spot where decades before Chach had planted a tree, to mark the extent of his kingdom. Private conversations between commanders including dreams in which the Prophet comes to give succor and hope to the weary, over forty epistles between the young commander and his governor, conversations and agreements with local rajas of Hind, appointments of non-Muslims to administrative and ceremonial positions, discourses with astrologers and mendicants - all intersperse the methodical military march of Muhammad b. Qasim through the kingdom of Dāhir. The text concludes with the set-piece - the description of the end of Muhammad b. Qasim which comes after the Caliph in Baghdad is tricked by the daughters of Dāhir to order the death of this young conqueror. Abruptly, *Chachnama* concludes, followed with just a short dedication and a prayer from Ali Kufi.

Following this brief synopsis of *Chachnama*, we note, again, that the text precisely labels itself a *hikayāt'* (stories, often told and heard orally), a *tar'īkh* (history), a *dastān* (epic) - and arranges the narration accordingly. In its format, the narration of particular "historical" episodes are sprinkled with discursive details of good governance and conduct guidelines. We cannot successfully place *Chachnama* in any one genre. As a *hikayāt*, there is far too great an emphasis on historical details, on noting the particularities of tribal and familial connections of participants. As a *tari'īkh*, there are too many digressions into good governance, into advice, into details of mysterious and mythical happenings, and most importantly, an unprecedented "local pre-

history" of the land that was opened for Islam. This at the expense of Islam's own cosmological pasts - the details of the times of the Prophets from Adam to Muhammad are completely absent, replaced by the account of Chach.

The closest genre influences for *Chachnama* may be the Persian translation of Ibn Muqaffa's Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna* by Abū al-Fadl Bal'amī (d. 940) and Firdawsī's *Shāhnamā* which was written at the court of Mahmūd at Ghazna in 1010 (another frontier history). *Kalīla wa Dimna* was a collection of animal fables which originated in the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra* and were translated into Pahlavi in the mid-sixth century. The Persian secretary for the Abbasid 'Abdallāh b. al-Muqaffa (d. 756) translated them into Arabic for the express purpose of creating a body of advice literature for the rulers (a 'Mirror for Princes'). Firdawsī's *Shāhnamā* tells of the rise and fall of three successive Iranian dynasties - each attempting to establish order but each falling into moral decay and disorder. Within this pre-history, Firdawsī shows examples for good governance and advice for rulers - a model closely followed by 'Ali Kufi. *Chachnama*, in turn, influenced later works - *Tar'īkh* of Muhammad Qasim Hindushah Firishtā (b. 1552) and *Tuhfāt-ul Kirām* of Mir Ali Sher Qanā (d. 1788). These works share an approach similar to the *Chachnama*, incorporating the history of local rulers, dastān and adāb in a traditional *tar'īkh*.

3.2.2 Historiography of *Chachnama*

The earliest reference to 'Ali Kufi's history is in 'Ayn ul-Mūlk Abdullāh Māhrū's *Inshā'i Māhrū* - a collection of administrative letters written during the reign

of Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq (1351-1388). In a letter addressed to the local Sindhi noble, who was resisting taxation, Māhrū refers to a "History of Dāhir, son of Chach" (*Ta'rīkh-i Dāhir-i Chach*) which is "well known to the common people in the land of Sindh" (*miyān 'āma'i khālq diyār-i sind mashūr ast*).[8] This reference provides the earliest clue as to the reception of 'Ali Kufi's text in the popular memory of the region of Sindh. It is obvious, as we will discuss shortly, that Māhrū means to disparage the text - as well as demean the inhabitants of Sindh. Still, we can read some significance into this mention. We can ascertain that despite its narrative thrust, *Chachnama* gained renown as as a compiled history of the region of Ucḥ. We can further note that its "re-naming" after a pre-Muslim king of Sindh hints at a far different after-life of this text, than what 'Ali Kufi intended. Lastly, we can surmise that some of the events depicted in the text, became oral lore more than a hundred and fifty years later.

Chachnama re-surfaces during the reign of Mughal emperor Akbar (1542-1605) in Nizāmuddin Ahmad's *Tabaqāt-i Akbari* (completed in 1593) and in Mir Muhammad Masūm Bhakkarī's *Tar'ikh-i Masūmi* (completed in 1600). *Tabaqāt-i Akbari* begins the section on the rulers of Sindh with, "it is narrated in the history of *Minhāj al-Masālik*, which is commonly known as *Chachnama*" and goes on to give a synopsis only of the Muhammad b. Qasim section.[9] In *Tar'ikh-i Masūmi*, by contrast, major portions of 'Ali Kufi's text are re-

8. Abdur Rashid ed., *Inshā-i Māhrū: Letters of 'Ain ud-Din 'Ain ul Mulk Abdullah bin Mahru.* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 1965), 233.

9. Brajendranath De, *Tabaqāt-i Akbarī: A History of India from the Early Musalmān Invasions to the Thirty-Eighth Year of the Reign of Akbar* vol. III. part II. (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1939), 761.

produced - some with extra gloss. Smaller excerpts and references to the *Chachnama* appear in Muhammad Qasim Firishta's *Gulsham-i Ibrāhīmī/Tar'īkh* (1606), the Beglārnama (1608), Mūfzal Khan's *Tar'īkh-i Mūfazali* (1712), and 'Ali Sher Qanā's *Tuhfat al-Kirām* (1768).

After the arrival of the East India Company in Sindh, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, *Chachnama* entered the British colonial historiography. The earliest mention is by Captain James McMurdo (d. 1820) who traveled the Indus in 1812. Both Lieutenant Thomas Postans (d. 1846), and his colleague Richard F. Burton (d. 1890), translated parts of the *Chachnama* in their respective travelogues. However, the historiographical verdict on *Chachnama* was delivered by Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859) in his 1841 *History of India: The Hindu and Mohametan Periods*, "Though loaded with tedious speeches, and letters ascribed to the principal actors, it contains a minute and consistent account of the transactions during Mohammed Casim's invasion."[10] Henry Miers Elliot (1808-1853) whose *The History of India, as told by Its Own Historians* was published posthumously, translated major portions of 'Ali Kufi's text which he deemed had, "an air of truth" about them. It is via these excerpts, that nationalist historians turned to the history of Muhammad b. Qasim.

In 1900, prominent Sindhi author and translator Mirza Qalich Beg, noted the deficiencies in the Elliot translations and published the first full English translation of the *Chachnama.* This was followed by a critical Persian edition published in 1939 by historian Umar b. Muhammad Daudpota. However,

10. Mountstuart Elphinstone, *History of India: The Hindu and Mahometan Periods* (London: John Murray, 1911), 303.

Daudpota's critical edition remained incomplete as he was unable to utilize the earliest extant manuscript of the *Chachnama*, copied in 1650.[11] That admirable task was completed, in 1983, by the paramount historian of Sindh, Nabi Buksh Khan Baloch whose *Fathnama-i Sind* remains the latest Persian edition of the *Chachnama*.[12] While translations into Urdu and Sindhi have been made from this 1983 edition by the Sindhi Adabi Board in Hyderabad, there has been no translation of the *Chachnama* into English since 1900.

3.2.3 Assessing *Chachnama*'s Assessments

The selections (and verdicts) of *Chachnama* rendered by the Orientalists Elphinstone and Elliot became the dominant framework for the nationalist historians who joined the on-going conversation regarding Muhammad b. Qasim - the imperial usurper and temple desecrator. Two central assumptions were made about the text: first, that its primary value was as a source for the eighth century accounts of Muhammad b. Qasim because it was a translation of an earlier, no longer extant Arabic history and second, that anything that could not be mined for historical fact was romantic gibberish clotting the text. These assumptions led the nationalist historians to treat the *Chachnama* as a carrier-text which had to be carefully stripped bare and re-assembled into a "historically accurate" narrative. Such an approach, removed any need to *read* the text as a whole, observe the intertextual con-

11. I want to thank the Punjab University Library, Oriental Manuscripts Division, for allowing me access to this manuscript.

12. N. A. Baloch, *Fathnamah-i Sind: Being the Original Record of the Arab Conquest of Sind*(Islamabad: Institute of Islamic History, Culture and Civilization, 1983)

nections between the histories of Chach and Muhammad b. Qasim, examine the moral universe created, or even connect it to the genres within which it emerged. Such oversights found little corrective, as this limited, and misleading reading of *Chachnama* as primarily a history of the eighth century became standard.

Hence, nationalist historians like Muhammad Habib (1895-1971) dismissed in entirety the pre-Islamic section of the *Chachnama* and enthusiastically embraced the rest as an authentic source for the eighth century Muslim conquest: "We may, therefore, confidently trust the *Chach Nama* as the safest of guides of the invasion."[13] Even those with more skepticism, were willing to parse out the historical truth from the romantic. R. C. Majumdar (1888-1980) declared *Chachnama* to contain "a kernel of historical facts," - though, it needed inherent fact-checking from archeological and textual sources.[14] The portions of the *Chachnama* that did not speak directly to Muhammad b. Qasim's conquest, became redundant and discardable:

> The whole of the first part of the work is overgrown with legendary matter and all but valueless as history. The description of Chach's conquests from Multān on the one side to Makrān on the other seems imaginary. It looks like *rifaccimento* in Persian prose of a poetical 'Digvijaya' and is every whit as unhistorical as similar lucubrations of Sanskrit poets and Rajput bards... It may have some basis in the flotsam and jetsam of local tradition, but if so, the tradition has been so grossly corrupted in the course of transmission by the fantastic accretions of subsequent inventiveness, as to amount to a travesty of the truth.[15]

13. Muhammad Habib, "Arab Conquest of Sind," *Islamic Culture* 3 (1929):184.

14. R. C. Majumdar, "The Arab Invasion of India," *Journal of Indian History*, 10 (1931):13.

15. Shahpurshah Hormasji Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History: A Critical Commentary on Elliot and Dowson's History of India* (Bombay: University Press, 1939), 83.

The *Chachnama* had already inherited from the colonial historians a marked valence as a politically sensitive text unveiling the destruction of the golden age of India (pre-Muslim classical period) by the invading Muslims, and the subsequent ushering in of India's dark ages (the medieval period). In the backdrop of this historiographical debate - as the discussion over the destruction of Somnath exemplified - *Chachnama* had to be read as a history of the eighth century and not that of the thirteenth century, during which it was produced. This view of the hidden "historical" value of *Chachnama* crystallizes in the works of postcolonial scholars such as H. T. Lambrick, Peter Hardy, and Yohanan Friedmann.[16]

They chose to systematically and thoroughly separate the history from the "flotsam and jetsam" that surrounded it. Names of people and places, dates of events and actions of political, religious or socio-cultural significance were teased out and, where available, carefully compared with Arabo-Persian biographical dictionaries, histories and chronicles. The notion of *Chachnama* as a *carrier* text - it carries within it another, more reliable text - became the overarching consensus of the field. The fact that the majority of *Chachnama* cannot be corroborated from any other source - textual or otherwise - is dealt by relying on 'Ali Kufi's own testimony that his text is a translation from an earlier Arabic text:

> Though numerous other persons who appear in the *Chach Nāma*

16. See H. T. Lambrick, *Sind, Before the Muslim Conquest* (Hyderabad: Sindh Adabi Board, 1973), Peter Hardy, "Is the Chach Nama Intelligible to the Historian as Political Theory?," in ed., H. Khuhro, *Sind through the Centuries* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1981) 111-117, and Yohanan Friedmann, "The Origins and Significance of the Chach Nāma" in ed., Yohanan Friedmann, *Islam in Asia, vol. 1: South Asia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984) 23-37.

> are not be located easily in Arab historiography, one has the distinct impression that Kūfī had the Arab tradition at his disposal and used it extensively. The *Chach Nāma* thus seems to be the only extant book which contains the detailed Arab tradition regarding the conquest of Sind."[17]

From within this framework, the historian sifts through the romantic for the historical and builds a cohesive argument for a "what happened" testimony of the Muslim past in India.[18]

I will not detail every single postcolonial work that utilized the historicity of *Chachnama*, but it would be useful to show how firmly historical analysis of the earliest Muslim presence in India relies on this particular understanding of the *Chachnama*. Let us return to the introductory textbook *Modern South Asia*:

> Eighth-century Sind was a typical Indian polity in which sovereignty was shared by different layers of kingly authority. The *Chachnama*, the principal source of our information on the Muslim conquest of Sind, elaborates a royal code which demands sensitivity to the fluidity and shifting nature of the real world of politics. This is in contrast to Kautilya's 'classical' and largely theorectical text *Arthashastra* which advises princes on ways to avoid the dilution of absolute and centralized power. The pardoning of a fallen enemy, described by the *Chachnama*, provided a quick route to legitmacy by renegotiating a balance between different hierarchically arranged layers of sovereignity. The Arab conquest of Sind, instead of representing a sharp disjuncture, can be seen as a form of adaptation to preexisting political conditions of India.[19]

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17. Friedmann, *Origins and Significance of the Chach Nāma*, 28.

18. For an example of work that epitomizes the best of such scholarship, see Derryl N. Maclean. *Religion and Society in Arab Sind* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989).

19. Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 20.

What Bose and Jalal fail to recognize, in building their analysis of eighth century India, is that a text written five hundred years after the event cannot, on its own testimony alone, be taken as a primary source - no matter our need to fill gaps in our historical knowledge. *Chachnama* can only be considered a "principal source" if we discount earlier histories (such as al-Balādhurī). The obvious danger of a reading that unmoors *Chachnama* from its thirteenth century historical and political context and places it into another one, is that it conflates later historiographical construction of a past with that past.

In reading *Chachnama* as a carrier-text, we force 'Ali Kufi's reconstructions onto a distant past and, ultimately, we read it through our particular prejudices. *Chachnama* becomes a political text of an entirely different sort. Take this verdict delivered by renowned novelist V. S. Naipul on the *Chachnama*:

> The *Chachnama* is in many ways like *The Conquest of New Spain* by Bernal Diaz del Costillo, the Spanish soldier who in his old age wrote of his campaigns in Mexico with Cortes in 1519 and after. The theme of both works is the same: the destruction, by an imperialist power with a strong sense of a mission and a wide knowldege of the world of a remote culture that knows only itself and doesn't begin to understand what it is fighting.[20]

It is this anachronistic reading of *Chachnama* as encapsulating some "long lost" and "true" history which allows Naipaul to bemoan the destruction of a purer Indic past and to claim it for history. Naipaul takes this notion of "lost history" from *Chachnama* itself, which is claimed by 'Ali Kufi to be a "translation" of a "lost history." Lost in the real sense that it has remained hidden in a trunk covered in an incomprehensible language; and lost in the

20. V. S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 132.

metaphorical sense that the "Turkic" Qabacha has no access to this originary moment of Islam in the very land where he is arguing for primacy. The political function of *Chachnama* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is worth examining in its own right - and we will do so in the following chapter - but what we must do is separate our reading of the 'Ali Kufi's text, produced in the thirteenth century, from it.

Our task, then, is to historicize the *Chachnama* and examine its production and its content within the thirteenth century milieu of Uch̤ Sharif. To do so, we must, first, situate *Chachnama* completely within the thirteenth century and investigate the consensus that it is a "translation."

3.2.4 "Translating" A New History

In *Chachnama*'s opening, 'Ali Kufi remarks that a book on the conquest of Sindh to match those "prose and verse books" on "Khurasān, Iraq, Fars, Rome, and Syria" is missing, and that the arrival of Islam on the shores of this sea and "the building of mosques and minarets from Kashmir to Qanauj" is thus left unheralded.[21] Determined to correct this, he travels to Bhakkar where he finds such a history "hidden in the veil of *Taz'ī* and under the cover of *Hijāzi* (Arabic)," and unknown to the *ahl-e 'Ajam* (non Arabs, broadly). He finds this remarkable history in the possession of a learned and pious descendant of the very tribe of Muhammad b. Qasim. In a section titled, *Tarjām-e Kitab* (Translation of the Book), he writes:

21. *Fathnama-i Sind*, 6.

> When this slave became acquainted with the book, he found it to be full of jewels of wisdom and pearls of advice in which many examples of the bravery and courage of Arabs and Syrians were inscribed, and their stature and intelligence was evident. Every fortification that they conquered, they ended the night of unbelief and ignorance. In every region they entered, they glorified Islam and erected mosques with minarets, and filled them with pious and ascetic believers. And to this day, the light of Islam, honesty, hard-work, and knowledge continues to shine in those regions. And in each epoch that a slave owned by the Prophet ascends to the throne, once again, he strips the rust of ignorance away from the mirror of Islam.[22]

'Ali Kufi is marking two explicit goals: that of linking this local history to the history of Arabs and promoting the concept of a 'renewal' of central principles of Islam. He is, in effect, linking the history of Sindh to the originary moment of Islam in Arabia. He goes on:

> When this *deni dastān* (a fable of faith) was taken from the veil of *Taz'ī* and the cover of *Hijāzi* into the *hūjrā-i 'Ajam* (the house of Persian), and put in the strictures of narrative and the fabric of honesty, and translated into the *sīlk-e nāsr* (clothes of prose), I dove into the thoughts to which great leader this new and strange *fath nama* (letter of conquest) can be dedicated.[23]

This could be a subtle hint that the original text may have been in verse. It should be noted, yet again, that he does not provide the name of the original text, nor does he provide any further indications on its provenance. In his dedication, 'Ali Kufi provides a further hint about his project of linking this *fath nama* to Arab history:

> This *fath nama* which is composed for religious reward and worldly benefits, and which will become a source of pride for the coming

22. *ibid.*, 7.

23. *ibid.*, 7.

> generations and researchers and kings alike will praise it. And everyone will be impressed by the strength of belief in Arabs and their status as those with knowledge and manners. And this *fath nama* will be a memorial to the grandeur and nobility of the inhabitants of Arabia and Syria. This *fath nama* should be given to one whose grand family is of Arab descent and at the hands of whose forefathers, the lands of Khurāsān and 'Ajam were conquered...[24]

'Ali Kufi means the chief minister of Qabacha, 'Ayn al-Mulk Fakhr al-Dīn al-Husain b. Abī Bark al Ash'arī who traced his lineage back to the Quraysh and the Prophet. Such an intense focus on the "Arabization" of the text needs to be seen in the wider context of the struggle between the Isma'īlī forces and the Sunni forces in Sindh for the centuries preceding 'Ali Kufi - a history of which, he must have been acutely aware.

'Ali Kufi returns to the claim of translation in his closing remarks:

> Even though this book contained great wisdom, a wealth of advice, and methods for the running of the affairs of governance. Even if this book had a great standing in the language of Arabs and in the diction of Arabia, and the notables of Arabia read it with great fervor and were proud of it. Yet, it was behind the veil of Arabic and devoid of the decoration and beauty of the *zabān-i Pahlavi* (Persian) and, for this reason, did not circulate outside of Arabia. From the people of *Fars*, no one adorned this bride of a *fath nama*; or dressed her with garments of exquisite language, justice and wisdom.
>
> No mighty rider took this horse into the grounds of clarity and the gardens of loquaciousness. But when the hard accidents of the world headed towards this weak one ('Ali Kufi), and the harshness of the times anchored their sail in his chest, and all manners of difficulties asserted themselves, and everywhere he turned, he saw dangers and treasons, then...in that same conditions, this man of incomplete intellect, chose to finish this book. Praise be to Allah,

24. *ibid.*, 8.

the God of All.[25]

Hence, in both the beginning and the end of his text, 'Ali Kufi stresses that he is translating an original Arabic text (perhaps in verse) into Persian. Such repeated declarations have, understandably, led modern historians to claim *Chachnama* as a translation of an earlier "history." Contemporary historians, such as N. B. Baloch and Derryl McLean, point out that some 23 *isnāds* within *Chachnama* contain an attribution to the Baghdadi historian al-Madā'inī. Since al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī and al-Yaq'ubi all attribute their material on al-Sind to al-Madā'inī, it certainly cements *Chachnama* with impressive source credentials. Perhaps, *Chachnama*, despite having being written some 500 years after the event, contains a "lost" history of al-Madā'inī.

This claim of translation, however, remains a hard case to make. While *Chachnama* follows the structure of al-Balādhurī, it does not duplicate any of the *isnād* we find in al-Balādhurī, nor does the *Chachnama* name a particular book by al-Madā'inī, or even give the name of the text of which it presumes to be a translation. When we look closely at the *isnād* in the *Chachnama*, we see two categories emerge. First, are the roughly thirty broad, generic *isnād*, without any particular names, which follow literary conventions: "writers of traditions say," "writers of histories and constructors of epics narrate," "some say," "the wise of Sindh say," "those who dress virgins report," "some of the Brahmins of al-Arōr say." Second, are those designed largely to provide the illusion of authoritative transmission, by quoting al-Madā'inī: "Far sighted wise-men and well-meaning elders report from Abu'l Hasān," "Abu'l Hasān

25. *ibid.*, 191.

heard it from Hāẓli," and, only once a direct transmission, "Muhammad b. 'Ali and Abu'l Hasān Madā'inī reports." It is easy to conclude that 'Ali Kufi wants to claim to the authority of al-Madā'inī while simultaneously eliding any traceable sources of transmission. The one event reported directly to al-Madā'inī also happens to be the most fantastic event in the whole text: the death of Muhammad b. Qasim. Based on this analysis, it is fair to conclude that 'Ali Kufi's text cannot reliably be concluded to contain a lost history of al-Madā'inī.

Chachnama is a complex text that draws upon a number of genres from Arabic and Persian historiography. It is a *ta'rīkh* (history) but not a simple aggregation of *akhbār* (reports) without a narrative thread. It is a *dastān* (epic) with romances - such as Chach and Suhnān Deo, Dāhir and his sister Ma'iān, Dāhir's wife Ladi and Muhammad b. Qasim, Changi and Jai'sināh, and finally Muhammad b. Qasim and the two daughters of Dāhir. It is also an *adāb* with advice and *'inshā* (letters), such as the over 30 exchanged between Hajjaj and Muhammad. And most crucially, it is a morality tale with the author providing a clear ordering of the known universe so as to provide a lesson for generations. Where *Chachnama* draws on existing historical texts (in verse or in prose), it is a transmutation of those texts.

The claim of translation by 'Ali Kufi, the pseudo-*isnād*, can perhaps be best understood as an attempt to position *Chachnama* within the historiography of his contemporaries - at Uch̤ and beyond. It is perhaps to soften the reception of this radically new text, which offered to re-cast local history as universal. Or we can conjecture that it was 'Ali Kufi's attempt at cementing his appeal

to "Arabize" the Turkic claims of Qabacha's court, with the knowledge that "finding" an original text would bolster such efforts. However we choose to parse it, this much remains clear: 'Ali Kufi never cites a name for the original text, which he "brought out of the veil of Hijāz," nor does he provide the name of an author or any direct citation of any other history that he used. Additionally, there are no texts outside of *Chachnama* derived from, based on, or referring to the events in 'Ali Kufi's history.[26] Based on both intertextual and extra-textual evidence, we can conclude that the *Chachnama* is not a translation of a unitary, pre-existing Arabic history of the eighth century and thus, we cannot utilize *Chachnama* as a primary source for the eighth century.

Writing about 'Awfi's *Javāmi' al-Hikāyāt va Lavāmi' al-Rivāyāt* (Compendium of Stories and Luminous Narratives), which also includes accounts of pre-Islamic Persian kings, as well as counsel and advice for a virtuous life, Muzaffar Alam proposes that it was an "attempt to preserve the traditions of 'Ajam, which in the assessment of the Muslim intelligentsia of the time were to form a part of their collective memory, and to inscribe this memory in an appropriate landscape."[27] Perhaps a similar case is to be made for 'Ali Kufi, who was 'Awfi's contemporary at Uch̤. *Chachnama* certainly aspires to preserve a memory within the cultural landscape of 'Uch̤. Except 'Ali Kufi chooses to employ the history of the region, and meld it within the history of Islam and, in so doing, produce a new history for the frontier.

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26. In essence, 'Ali Kufi literally ran into a stranger who led him to an untouched early source which was available only to him, and which no one had ever seen before, or since. One looks in vain for a historian who hasn't had that fantasy.

27. Muzzafar Alam, "The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan" in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia,* ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 141-2.

3.3 De-Historicizing *Chachnama*

In *Querying the Medieval*, Ronald Inden provides a methodological (and theoretical) framework for historicizing texts, so as to move beyond the limitations imposed by colonial and post-colonial philologists and structuralists. Drawing on the work of R. G. Collingwood, Inden advances the notion of simple or complex "agents" who author texts that are dialogical in their discursive nature and operate within a "scale of texts," defined as, "later agents and their texts overlap with those of their predecessors and contemporaries and, by engaging in a process of criticism, apporpriation, repetition, refutation, amplification, abbreviation, and so on, position themselves in relation to them."[28] Such a reading allows us to move away from the notion of a reliable "author" producing a static text that we can mine for historical facts. The political, polemical, and cultural arguments made in the *Chachnama* can only emerge when we pay attention to the sites and practices of its production; examine it within the literary genres with which it explicitly and implicitly engages and; frame its social function.

The reading of *Chachnama* that I will provide below echoes Inden's own task in historicizing the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa,* a text from eighth century Kashmir previously mined for its "facts" alone.[29] My task is to situate the *Chachnama* within the various genres to which it claims and to highlight some

28. Ronald B. Inden, Jonathan S. Walters, and Daud Ali, *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12.

29. See Ronald B. Inden, "Imperial Purāṇas: Kashmir as Vaiṣṇava Center of the World" in *Querying the Medieval,* ed. Ronald B. Inden, Jonathan S. Walters, and Daud Ali (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000), 29-98.

of the key themes that emerge from such a reading. In revisiting *Chachnama* as a historically situated text from the thirteenth century and as a production of a key moment of present history, the underlying desire is to:

> ...establish a dialogical or interdiscursive relationship with the texts we study. Instead of looking at them as dead monuments, as mere sources of factual information or the expression of a creative and exotic genius that we can only appreciate in itself for itself, or as the accidental expression/sedimentation of some larger structure or context, we want to see them as living arguments both in their historic usages and by virtue of our reenactment of their arguments, in our own present. We want to see what we can learn from these texts that pertains to our own time and its problems.[30]

3.3.1 Situating *Chachnama*

Earlier, I described the political world within which 'Ali Kufi decided to explicitly imagine a past for Uc̣h Sharif that paired Islamic cosmology with its predecessor. This act of imagination - a deliberate attempt to create a brand new, local past for the Turkic warlord Qabacha - now needs to be situated within the literary and historical productions in Islamicate societies. *Chachnama* identifies itself as a *tarī'kh* (history), a *dastan* (epic), a *hikayāt* (an oral tale), and an *adāb* (advice). It uses narrative techniques from all these genres to illustrate the cosmology within which it wants to situate the twin stories of Chach b. Salā'ij and Muhammad b. Qāsim. It is fairly certain, even though we lack direct knowledge, that 'Ali Kufi's text exists in a well-known scale of texts - interacting with standard histories of Muslim pasts, of newer forms of cultural imaginations, as well as, the non-Muslim world that

30. *ibid, Querying the Medieval,* 14.

surrounded it in the thirteenth century. In this section, I tease out some of these threads from *Chachnama* to show how seamlessly 'Ali Kufi interweaves genres and forms to construct this hybrid text.

Julie Meisami in *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* identifies three major types of historical writings prevalent in Islamicate societies: the universal histories - such as those of al-Ṭabarī and al-Ya'qubi - which were often annalistic, dynastic and episodic; the regional histories - such as al-Azdī (d. 946) - which focused on a specific region to provide the narration of the coming of Islam; and the dynastic, kingly histories - such as those of the Sāmānīd - which focused entirely on the succession of kings and were concerned with contemporary matters.[31] As *ta'rīkh*, there is a development from the Prophetic *sirā* (life), to the *akhbār* (reports/narratives), to the *tabaqāt* (generations of notables) - all of which became parts of the universal histories.[32] However, on the whole, they were indifferent to pre-Islamic pasts, dealing with it either through the lives of Prophets or through a pre-history of a region.

The space for pre-Islamic pasts was created most forcefully by Firdawsī in his version of *Shahnama*, begun in 999 and completed in 1010. Starting with the creation of the universe and with the grand struggle of good and evil in the foreground, *Shahnama* covers four dynastic periods of Iran's past - the Pīshdādīs, the Kayānids, the Ashkanians and the Sasanians. Firdawsī employs the cyclical structure of narrative, often mirroring narratives based on

31. See Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 12.

32. See *Ta'rīkh. EI*

past histories. He specifically highlights the moral decline that is followed by political decline of the ruler and the state. Within it, of particular interest to us, are the stories of the "heroes" Rustum and Iskander (Alexander) and their exploits in various epochs - the most successful manifestation of the heroic epic. While Firdawsī's epic was only indirectly a learning tool for the Ghaznavid rulers, the 'Mirror for Princes' genre - *adāb* - explicitly sought to instruct the ruler in the modes of proper conduct, justice and the tools to develop a loyal populace. Ibn al-Muqaffa's Arabic translation of the Pahlavi text of *Kālila wa Dimna* is the first known example of such work. However, he also compiled a collection of letters - *Risāla fi al-ṣaḥāba* (Letters Concerning Notables) - containing advice for the governors, which laid the basis for the development of the 'Mirror for Princes' genre, with *Nasīhat al-Mulūk* (Advice for Governors) by al-Ghazzalī (1058-1111) being the most well known example.

Chachnama contains three distinct layers of narrative form - *ta'rīkh*, *adāb* and *hikayāt*. The first layer is *ta'rīkh* - a political history of the region of Sindh. Commencing before the arrival of Muhammad b. Qasim, it follows the coming to power of a secretary, Brahmin Chach, and details his consolidation of the "four corners" of his empire. The exploits of his brother and his two sons conclude this first section. The account now shifts to the Muslim world, and the narrative thread begins with the four Rightly Guided Caliphs and their attempts to conquer Hind and Sindh. The bulk of the *Chachnama* is the detailed account of Muhammad b. Qasim's conquest - fort by fort, army by army - followed by his administrative decisions in Sindh, and ending with the death of Muhammad b. Qasim.

The second narrative layer is *adāb* - advice manual for good governance - focusing on Muslims and non-Muslim interactions in Sindh - in theory and in practice. It does this in two ways: first by demonstrating the underlying principles, *Chachnama* reproduces verbal advice being given and received, written letters bearing explicit and implicit directions for conduct, and second, it notes anecdotes which reveal the wisdom of a course of action. It explicitly ties the principles of good governance to the pre-history of Islam - by focusing on the wise Chach and his history in the beginning of the text. Next, it highlights the pre-Islamic modes of governance and shows them being implemented by the Muslim conquerors themselves - legitimizing not only the practices but their underlying theories of governance.

The third narrative layer, in the discursive mode of story-telling, is the heroic epic. This is where *Chachnama* builds larger-than-life, true-to-a-divinely-inspired-self heroes and sprinkles their romantic tales throughout the narrative. This last narrative layer, the *hikayāt*, contains within it a distinctly moral and gendered reading of the two earlier layers - of *tar'īkh* and of *adāb*. The story of Chach's seduction by the Queen Suhnan Deo, or the romance between Jai Sinhā and the young princess, or the revenge of the daughters of Dahīr upon Muhammad b. Qasim. In these, and other, stories *Chachnama* presents the consumer (reader or listener) of the text with the most familiar tropes and literary devices. It uses these episodes and set-pieces to further solidify its moral world-view.

The two models of histories upon which *Chachnama* draws are the *Futūh al-Buldān* of al-Balādhurī and the *Shahnama* of Firdawsī - the first existing

strictly within the Islamic cosmology and the second in a pre-Islamic, Iranian cosmology. In both cases, the historical narrative served as an ethical framework. For al-Balādhurī, and al-Ṭabarī, the progression is linear and the teleology is directly focused towards the Prophet and then away from the Prophet, with the moral universe expanding and contracting according to the chronological distance from him. For Firdawsī, it is illuminating the cyclical pattern of rise and fall based on the moral qualities of the rulers, themselves. Where al-Ṭabarī is a series of reports, Firdawsī is an epic of lesson incorporating heroes - both human and divine. *Chachnama* uniquely blends these two strands of historiography - taking the cyclical universe of Firdawsī and planting within it the righteously guided history of al-Ṭabarī. Unlike his contemporaries, such as 'Awfī or Juzjānī, 'Ali Kufi situates his history in Sindh - the local region - and not ancient Persia or the Prophetic Time. He places his narrative immediately before the coming of Muslims, followed by the conquest itself. He splices within this tropes from ethico-political literature, most prominently Ibn al-Muqaffa's *Adāb al-Kabīr*. And again, unlike his contemporaries, he pauses the past - abruptly breaking the tradition of contemporary history which would have guaranteed him a bequeath at the court.

3.3.2 *Ta'rīkh* in *Chachnama*

To understand how seamlessly *Chachnama* incorporates these three narrative layers, we will look at one explicit portion of the text and see the process through which *Chachnama* takes the bare structure of a historical narrative

and builds it up. Imagine, if you will, a reversal of the painful plucking of facts, so dear to modern historians. Given that al-Balādhurī's *Futūh al-Buldān* contains the largest amount of material attributed to al-Madā'inī and given that the arguments for the primacy of *Chachnama* hinges on al-Madā'inī, we will compare the reporting of an event in al-Balādhurī to the *Chachnama*.

Al-Balādhurī begins his chapter on the conquest of Sindh from the reign of 'Umar and the Arab attacks on the port cities of al-Daybul, Thana and Broach. Next he covers the time from 'Uthmān to 'Abd al-Malik and the campaigns that came via Makrān. The third portion is the description of the frontier of al-Hind during al-Walīd, and the renewal of naval expedition to al-Daybul, followed by the campaign of Muhammad b. Qasim. The final section deals with the Arab governors and the re-conquest of various cities under the 'Abbasids. *Chachnama* follows the template laid out by al-Balādhurī. It begins the narrative at the same point - with 'Umar - and re-states the key events according to al-Balādhurī. However, the *Chachnama* greatly expands the narrative structure - adding military, political, and social details. None of these details can be traced back to any other source besides the *Chachnama* and are most assuredly either composite creations of 'Ali Kufi or later scribes. Let us look at the earliest victory of Muhammad b. Qasim, the fall of the city of Daybul. First, is al-Balādhurī's account:

> Then Muhammad b. al-Qāsim left *Arma'il*, and with Juhm b. Zuhr al-Ju'fi arrived at *al-Daibul* on a Friday. There he received ships with men and weapons and supplies. After getting to al-Daybul, he constructed trenches around the troops and set up lances around the trenches and flags affixed to them. The armies were stationed under their flags. He installed a catapult known as *arus*, which took 500 men to pull. In *al-Daibul* was a great *budd* (temple) with a tall flagstaff, and on that flagstaff was a red flag, which

> covered the city when it blew with winds. And they report that the temple had a great minaret built in the midst of the city, which housed their *sanam* (images/idols). The temple was known by the name of the idols. Sometimes the idol is in the minaret - along with other things they worship. Everything they held in esteem, they consider it to be *budd.* And that is also a *budd.* And the image is also a *budd.*
>
> Every third day, al-Ḥajjāj's letters reached Muhammad and Muhammad's letters with news of what he saw in front of him and his thoughts, reached al-Ḥajjāj. In a letter al-Ḥajjāj ordered Muhammad, "Install the catapult *arus.* Shorten the east-facing support. Call the operators of *arus* and ask them to aim for the flagstaff - like the Romans - which you described to me." The flagstaff was aimed at and broken and great distress spread through the unbelievers. Then Muhammad, attacked them after they attacked him and drove them back. He ordered ladders and men climbed them - the first being a man from the Murad of the people of Kufa. The city was conquered by force. For three days, Muhammad killed those within. The governor of Dāhir fled and the *sādni* (custodian) of their house of gods was killed. Muhammad declared it, quarters for Muslims and built a mosque and settled 4,000 men.[33]

Al-Balādhurī's description has a narrative structure with some key hinges: the arrival of the army and the entrenchment, the catapult, the temple, the notice of communications, the first man to reach the top of the fort, the fall of the fort, and finally the treatment of prisoners of war and sacred sites. *Chachnama* retains these narrative hinges, and build an edifice on top of this structure that combines all three of the narrative layers we discussed above: the history, the advice, and the story-telling. And in doing so, *Chachnama* broadens this episode into a panorama through which the interactions between believers and non-believers, the appointment of advisors and counsellors, and the moral universe of stars and gods are illuminated for the lis-

33. al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān,* 422.

tener/reader. It takes the Arabic account and simultaneously makes it more Muslim and more Hindustani - by combining the two sources of sacred power, Allah and the local gods. And this is how *Chachnama* illuminates a new space for the inhabitants of Hind in Islamic cosmology:

> **Preparation of the Arab army and the arrival of Hajjaj's letter**: He left 'Arambil, and appointed Mu'asib b. Abdur Rahman to the advance brigade, Jūhm b. Ẓuhr al-Jāfī to the rear, 'Atiāh b. Sa'ad al-'Awfī to the left and Musa b. Sinān to the right. The rest of the sharp swordsmen and special forces, he kept in the center with him and advanced. Then, on the day of last Friday of the 93rd year of the Hijra, in the month of Muharram, he arrived at Daybul. At the same day, the naval forces, under Khurīm b. 'Umaru and Ibn Mughīra arrived. They gave him the letters from Hajjaj and advised him to dig a trench for the battle. And in the letters was written: "I am sending special men to serve under you. One is 'Abd al-Rahman b. Salīm al-Kalbī whose courage has been tested numerous times, and no enemy has been able to face him in battle. Second Sufiyān b. al-Būrd whose intellect has no match and who is unique in his devotion and in his faith. Third is Qātan b. Burk al-Kalbī who has helped us in previous difficulties and who demands your respect. He speaks the truth, and to whatever task he is appointed, will fulfill it to its conclusion. He is free from evils and has always helped Hajjaj. Fourth is Jarāh b. Abdallah who is one of the experienced, and battle-tested and excels in advice. And the fifth is Mu'jash b. Nūbat 'Azdī.
>
> All of them are my trusted advisors and I hold no one superior to them in faith and devotion. I hope that they will not disagree with you or consort with your enemies. Of everyone I have mentioned in this letter, none is dearer to me than Khurīm b. 'Umaru because he is a brave and courageous man. In battle, he remains brave and does not burden his mind with thinking. He is of the select few. And deserving of your respect. He comes from a pious and honest family and when Khurīm is with you, I will have no fear because he is adorned with good and pious behavior and will not allow anyone to turn against you. Do not separate him from yourself. After you read this letter, all food and comfort is forbidden to you, until you have penned me full details of everything that has occurred to this point."

Hajjaj had great love for Amir Muhammad Qasim and, for his sake, gave many alms every day and prayed extensively for him. Among the friends of Muhammad were Yakār b. Wa'il and 'Adīl b. Farj who sacrificed lambs after his departure and gave alms from the jewelry of their wives and daughters, so that no doubt remained. And 'Adīl quoted these verses:

The jewels of my daughter, I stole.
Even their bracelets and gold nose-rings, did not remain.
Bereft of their pearls and rubies, they were unrecognizable.
They appealed to the Amir ul-Momi'nin.
He did not listen. They appealed to their mother and father.

Far-sighted wise-men and well-meaning elders told Abu'l Hasan who reported that he heard from a freed slave of Banu Tamīm Abu Muhammad that: Muhammad b. Qasim arrived near the fort of Daybul and his army dug trenches, planted their banners and beat their drums. Every brigade remained at the place where they were appointed and all the catapults were aligned. One catapult belonged specifically to the *Amir ul-Momi'nin* (Caliph) and its name was *Arusak* - to operate which, five hundred men had to pull it to throw a stone.

In the center of Daybul was a tall and grand *but-kuda* (house of idol/image). And at its head was a dome, on which a green, silk banner waved. The *but-khana* was 40 yards tall and its dome was also 40 yards tall. The banner had four tongues - which unfurled, each tongue pointed to its own direction and their rotations made them seem like towers.

When the people of the fort saw the army of Islam, they unfurled the banner and prepared for war but we did not have permission to engage them. In this manner, seven days passed. Every day a letter was received with orders to wait. At last, on the eighth day, the permission to engage arrived. Muhammad b. Qasim arranged his troops and attacked the fort. The people of the fort found refuge inside the fort. Suddenly, a Brahmin emerged from the fort and asked for protection and said:

"May the Just Amir remain protected. Our book of Astrology has this prediction: The *vilayāt* (polity) of Sindh will open to the hands of the army of Islam and the unbelievers will be routed. How-

ever, the banner of this temple casts a protective spell. As long as this banner flies, this fort will not fall. If you try and break the dome of the temple, the banner will be destroyed and the fort will be yours."

Jū'ana breaks the Banner on the temple with the catapult: Then Muhammad b. Qasim called Jū'ana Salmī, the operator of the catapult, and said to him: "Can you break the banner that flies at the head of that temple with your catapult? If you destroy it, I will give you 10,000 dirhām as a reward." Jū'ana replied: "This is a special catapult from the Capital and it is called *Arusak*. If we cut its height by 2 yards, then I can destroy the banner and the dome, in three throws of the stone." Muhammad b. Qasim replied: "If you destroy the banner and the dome then I will reward you 10,000 dirhām. But if you don not succeed in breaking the dome and you also destroy the catapult, than what shall I do with you?" Jū'ana replied, "If my aim goes astray, than cut my hands off."

Muhammad b. Qasim wrote a letter to the Governor of Notables, Hajjaj b. Yusuf in which he narrated Jū'ana's proposition. In nine days, the reply reached via Kirmān and the order contained the same stipulation and it was further said: When you advance for battle, it is advisable to keep the sun at your back so that you can see your enemies clearly. And before launching into battle, pray to Allah Almighty for support and succor. Any inhabitant of Sindh that seeks peace, grant it, but no one from the inhabitants of Daybul can be granted peace on any condition.

Then one of the soothsayers of the fort came out and said: "Each time we compute in our books, the result is the same: the reign of the kings of Hind is at an end and the reign of Muslims is now started. Hence, the captured women of Islam are given solace. If the Amir will give me and my family protection, I will take a letter from you to them so that they have peace."

Muhammad b. Qasim gave him protection and told him to keep his followers surrounding the Muslim prisoners. Then that Brahman went back into the siege and gave the good news to the prisoners that Muhammad b. Qasim is the nephew of Hajjaj, and he will conquer this fort and bring about your freedom.

Imaduddin Muhammad b. Qasim calls forth Jū'ana: The

next day, which was the ninth day of their stay in Daybul, as soon as the sun rose from the East, Muhammad b. Qasim called on Jū'ana. And wherever Jū'ana indicated, he had the catapult cut. Then he told the army to surround the castle and begin showering it with arrows and also called on five hundred men to pull the ropes of the catapult. Jū'ana released the first stone and the Muslims shouted God's supremacy. At the very first strike, the staff was broken and the banner ripped. Then the second stone went straight and hit the dome and destroyed it, breaking the spells. The inhabitants of Daybul were in shock. And by the command of Allah, the fort fell to the ground.

Muhammad b. Qasim ordered the troops: He ordered Jūhm b. Ẓuhr al-Jāfī to the east, 'Atā b. Malik al-Qays to the west, Nūbata b. Hūnẓalā al-Kalbī to the north wall and 'Awn b. Kulīb to the south tower and Zākān b. 'Alwān al-Bakrī and Khūrim and Ibn Mughāira in the center along with a thousand warriors from Basra next to him. Then the trumpet for battle was sounded. The first person who climbed the wall was Sa'adi b. Khūrim from Kufa. After him, 'Ajāl b. Abd al-Malik from Basra. When the army of Islam reached the top of the walls, then the inhabitants of Daybul opened the doors and asked for clemency. At this, Muhammad b. Qasim declared: I do not have orders for clemency, and killed the *Ahl-e Salāh* (those who are armed with swords) for three days.

Jahin b. Barsīd climbed the fort wall at night and reached the place where Dāhir b. Chach kept his horses and camels. He climbed on one and set off. Until he reached a point of the Mehran river (Indus), called *karmiti* and from there dispatched a horseman to inform Dāhir.

Dāhir asked: Where has the *jahen-e Budh* (the one who gnaws on the Budh) reached?

The horseman replied, "*karmiti*, that is, by the dark soil."

Dāhir said: May dirt be on your head. Don't take ill-names in front of Kings - they have bad omens. Say instead, by the moonlit soil.

Then Muhammad b. Qasim reached the temple. The caretakers had locked themselves inside and were preparing to set themselves

on fire. He killed all those that he met and chained the 700 beautiful, bejeweled girls who served the idol. Then four thousand men, and some say four hundred men, came inside and helped take their jewels off.

The Brahmin whom Muhammad b. Qasim had given protection: Then Muhammad b. Qasim ordered that the man whom he had given his protection be brought forth. When he arrived, he indicated the place to find the imprisoned women and men who had been taken from the Sarandip ships or from Badīl's troops. They were all released. Then whomever had entered the fort with the army, was appointed stay inside the fort. Those he had freed, he asked to stay in the fort to recover from their difficulties. And told them to defend the fort to the best of their abilities.

Arrival of Qilā, the Warden: The prisoners of Daybul were under the supervision of a man name Qilā the son of Mahrtāj who was man of great intellect and abilities. He was an author and an expert writer and of good intentions. The troops of Badīl and the prisoners of Sarandip were under his supervision. Muhammad b. Qasim called him and ordered him punished. At which he said: Oh Amir of the armies of Islam, ask them what efforts I spend in their ease. When the truth is evident to you, then take away the order for my killing.

Muhammad b. Qasim inquires from the Translator: Then Muhammad b. Qasim asked the translator: Ask him, what he did for the prisoners? He said: Why don't you inquire with the prisoners themselves, so that the Amir knows my true nature.

Inquiry from the Prisoners: Muhammad b. Qasim called the prisoners in and asked them: What aid or help did this warden give you? They all answered in one voice: "We are thankful to him. He gave us all of his sympathy. He always believed that the Army of Islam will come for us and gave us hope in the conquest of Daybul." Muhammad b. Qasim then invited him to Islam and he became a witness to God's one-ness. He appointed him to the rank of *Nawab* in Daybul. He was asked to mind the accounts of income and taxation on the country. And Hamīd b. Widāh al-Najdi was appointed Governor of Daybul and given control over the rights of the fort.

Collection of One-Fifth of the Spoils of Daybul: Such is writ-

ten by the historians who heard from Hakām b. Umāru who heard it from his father and grandfather that: The Brahmin who had asked for protection was named Suo Deo. My grandfather said and I heard from him and when Daybul was conquered and the Muslim prisoners were freed. Then Muhammad b. Qasim ordered that a fifth of all collected spoils of war be entered into the Treasury. After which, all of the fifth was shipped to Hajjaj and the rest was kept to be distributed to the conquerors of 'Arambīl and Daybul: Two shares to the mounted troop, one share to the foot troop and the camel-rider, each. The rest of the spoils, and the slaves were collected. Two daughters of the Raja of Daybul were also send to Hajjaj.

News of Daybul's sack reaches Dāhir: The narrator of this *hikayāt* (tale) has heard Hakām narrate that when the news of Daybul's conquest reached Raja Dāhir b. Chach that Daybul was occupied by the army of Islam and that the Raja of Daybul had fled to Jaisini'āh in Nirūn Kot. And then when the news of the bravery and courage of the people of Arabia and Syria was explained to him then Dāhir wrote a letter to Jaisini'āh near Nirūn Kot and told him that as seen as he receives the letter, he should cross the River Mihran and fortify Brahmānabad and appoint a Buddhist to Nirūn Kot and ask him to protect the fort.

Letter from Raja Dāhir: *Bismīllah al-Azīm zi'l-wahadīnat wa Rāb-i Sil'āij* (In the Name of the Great One Allah and the God of Sil'āij) This letter is from Dāhir b. Chach, the ruler of Sind, the King of Hind and the Master of Land and Sea to the Headstrong and Deluded Muhammad b. Qasim who is so fond of killing and war and is so devoid of mercy that he doesn't even protect his own troops and propels them to their doom. Once before, there was a man with such a prideful dream. And he came here bearing an arrow of politics and 'Abu al-Ās al-Hakām was with him. On his mind was the obsession that he will conquer Hind and Sind. One or two of my lowly *Thakūr* (lieutenant) went to Daybul for hunting, and ended up killing him and defeating his army.

Now that same obsession is on Muhammad b. Qasim's mind and it will lead him, and his army, to the same suicidal path. If he did conquer Daybul, it was not a strong fort and there was no army stationed there. He conquered a town where artisans and traders lived. If there had been any notable there, no one would have found your remains. If I had given Raja Jaisini'āh b. Dāhir - who

is the bringer of terror to the kings of this earth; the one who seeks vengeance from the oppressors of the time; an equal to Ascetics and to the Raja of Kashmir in his knowledge; holder of crown; at whose doorstep the Rajas of Hindustan lay their heads; all in Hind and in Sind are his servants and the polities of Tur'ān and Makrān wear his commands as their necklaces; who controls a hundred drunken elephants, and rides one white elephant; whom no horse can resist and none can stand in his way - permission, he would have taught you such a lesson that until the End of Days no army would have dared enter this realm. So, don't let pride ruin your head or your fate will be the same as that of Badīl. You don't have the capacity to battle with me, and neither do you have the strength to resist.

When this letter of Dāhir reached Muhammad b. Qasim, he had it translated by his secretary and after listening to it, wrote a reply with his own pen.

Letter of Muhammad b. Qasim to Dāhir: *Bismillāh al-Rahmān ir-Rahīm* This letter is from Muhammad b. Qasim al-Thaqafī who takes vengeance on behalf of Muslims from prideful rebels to the unbeliever, ignorant, apostate, proud Dāhir b. Chach Brahmin who rebels on the basis of this cruel Time. Let it be known, that what you wrote was filled with the most ignorance and foolishness and that your opinions were corrupted and rank. I have read about your strength, bravery, weaponry, elephants, horses and armies and I have understood what you wrote. Our only strength and solace is in the the One True God who arranges everything. Oh helpless one! why do you take such pride in your elephants, horses and armies? An elephant is the basest being, devoid of all intelligence and power who cannot even defend its body from the tiniest mosquito. Those horses and riders that you shocked you, were God's army.

It is only due to your ill-actions and your bad habits and your pride that we decided to attack your land. Because you stopped the ships from Sarandip and imprisoned the Muslims. Even though, the entire world heeds the commands of the Capital (where the Prophet's servants rule), you are the only one who rebelled. And that tax which had been due to the Treasury - which your predecessors Kings and Governors understood as their duty - you stopped it. And when you embarked on these ill habits and did not stop and refused to yield to the Capital, then I had was send to take revenge on your for your doings. Wherever you will fight me, God - who

> helps the meek overcome the oppressors - will help me overcome you. I will conquer you, and dispatch your head to Iraq or I will sacrifice my life in the path of God. And this *jihād* is a *jihād* against non-believers and apostates and it is necessary on me. I am grateful to God for giving me victory and I am hopeful that he will continue to find me victorious. God Willing, written in 93 A.H.[34]

Clearly *Chachnama* ensures that the overall narrative structure of this episode remain intact - as it appeared in al-Balādhurī. Furthermore, it includes those hinges - it mentions the name of the first person to climb the fort wall - which ground the narrative in *tar'īkh*. Similarly, it keeps the *isnād* - both generic and specific. But, it then surrounds the event in the second and third layers of *adāb* (advice) and *hikayāt* (story). The story of the catapult, the ride of the informant to Dāhir, and the warden are all micro-events that structure *Chachnama*'s moral universive. It is in the final two letters - between Dāhir and Muhammad - that the *Chachnama* shows clearly what is at stake by invoking the source of true power in the universe - the One God. But, even as it stresses moral principles from the Qur'an but it does not exclude the non-Believers from it. In the episode above, while there is one key member (the Warden) who converts to Islam, his morality exists *prior* to his encounter with Islam. Similarly, the various priests are not demonized. It is instructive, then, that *Chachnama* does not use religious ideology as the sole basis for political power. Even as Muhammad b. Qasim describes his faith, he is careful to lay out distinct *causus belli* for the invasion: Dāhir's inability to protect Muslim civilians, his refusal to honor past agreements, and his refusal to pay taxes.

For the historian of the eighth century, the question that emerges from the

34. *Fathnama-i Sind,* 74- 81.

above is: What did *Chachnama* add to our knowledge of the conquest, given that nothing in this account can be substantiated from other sources? The names of participants mentioned in the letters and in the descriptions are untraceable in the usual biographical dictionaries. The letters themselves do not fit the template for even the ninth century - following the *'inshā* traditions of the thirteenth century instead. Essentially, we cannot take, at face value, any of the additional details provided by the *Chachnama* as relating to the actual events as they might have transpired in 712. However, we can certainly use this event, and the letters, to observe how Qabacha and his ruling elite sought to situate themselves in relation to other imperial formations and their subjects.

This should not give the impression that *Chachnama* merely exaggerates al-Balādhurī's narrative. That is, after all, the methodological assumption that has allowed historians to "strip bare" the historical facts within *Chachnama*. In fact, *Chachnama*'s treatment of history is far more complex. I want to give two examples where *Chachnama* situates history within a *local* context.

Ta'rīkh in Chachnama: The House of Gold

Al-Balādhurī narrated that after the conquest of Multān, there was so much booty that the Muslim army dug a room into which they threw the gold - thereby giving al-Sind the name, "frontier with the house of gold." *Chachnama* situates this within a different, pre-Islamic context:

> When Multan was conquered, the nobles of the city gathered and gave 60,000 *dirhām weight* silver. Every member of the cavalry

> received 400 *dirhām weight* silver. Then Muhammad b. Qasim said, "We should think of the Treasury in the Capital."
>
> While they were discussing this, suddenly a Brahmin emerged and said: "When the time of unbelievers is over, the temple is destroyed, and the world is illuminated with Islam's light, and in the space of temples, mosques have been erected, I heard from the elders of Multan: In ancient time and under past rulers, in this city was a king Jubān who ruled over Kashmir. He was a Brahmin man and a monk and strict follower of his creed. He spent his time worshipping his images. When his treasure exceeded the boundaries of counting and calculating, then in the east of Multan, he built a fountain, 100 yards by 100 yards. And in the center of this fountain, he erected a temple of fifty yards by fifty yards. And in this temple, he built a cellar in which were 40 drums of copper. And in each drum were 330 *mun* of gold. And on top of this cellar, he had installed a red image. And around the four corners of the fountain, he installed trees".[35]

Here, the fascination with temple/treasure that was apparent even in the ninth and tenth century geographical accounts morphs a one-line description from al-Balādhurī into a remarkable description of near-heavenly treasure pre-dating Islam's arrival. How is the establishment of this house of gold taken from the Muslim army and given to the Raja of Kashmir? It is through the explicit task of imagining not just a basement of gold but a paradise-like structure that connects the Indo-Persianate imagination of *janāt* (heaven) with the sacred geography of Hind. With the divinely ordained transfer of power to the Muslims, we get the very literal handing over, of Paradise. *Chachnama*, then, uses the *akhbār* reportage from al-Balādhurī and transforms it into yet another piece of evidence supporting the divine sanction of Muslims in Hind. Clearly, such concerns were illegible to al-Balādhurī in

35. *ibid.,* 183.

the ninth century but in the historical context of alien rule in Sindh, they were central to ‘Ali Kufi. This episode in *Chachnama* becomes unintelligible as a history of the eighth century, but becomes profoundly descriptive as a history of the thirteenth century: a legitimizing force.

Ta'rīkh in Chachnama: The Case of the Jāts

In another sense, the history in *Chachnama* also serves as legal and administrative precedent. The Muslim practices of taxation on civilians, of grants to and from neighboring kings, of taking hostages from forts to ensure their continued cooperation are all given a “history” with the Chach cycle of the text. In one key area - the social practices concerning a group of people, it is even explicitly linked to the pre-history of Islam's arrival in Sindh.

After Chach conquers the city of Brahamanabad, he imposes a tax on the people, along with a special arrangement for the Jāt tribe from Lohana who had opposed Chach. *Chachnama* narrates:

> Then Chach stayed in the fort of Brahmanabad and, for the sake of commerce and the safety of the people, he instituted an income. Then he called forth and humiliated the Jāts of Lohana and punished their leader and imprisoned him. And imposed on them the conditions that they will never carry a sword, nor wear clothes of silk or spun cotton. Their upper covering may be sewn but their lower covering can not be sewn and must be of black or red color. They cannot put saddles on their horses. They must never cover their heads nor their feet. When they leave their houses, they must be accompanied by a dog. They will supply the governor's kitchen with cooking wood. They will be employed as guides and spies. And they will cultivate such qualities, so that when an enemy approaches this fort, they will be able to defend it on their

own honor.[36]

This first indication of the special status of the Jāts is re-inforced during the reign of Dāhir. In the defense that he submits to his elder brother for marrying their sister, Dāhir proclaims, "Even though Ma'īn is our father's daughter, she is a daughter of the Jāts who are by nature rebellious and criminal, especially their women. The reality is that, they can never be trusted, depended upon, or taken on their own words. This proverb on the Jāts is widely known: 'Whoever grabbed the leg of a goat, got milk. Whoever grabbed the hand of a Jāt woman, mounted her.' Since, Mā'in is by nature a stranger, marrying her is not a sin."[37]

The issue of Jāts is revisited when Muhammad b. Qasim conquers the same fort of Brahamanabad. Until this moment, he has had only one guiding principle for dealing with the locals which was spelled out for him by Hajjaj:

> The orders are clear: Whoever fights you, kill them. Else, capture their women and children as hostages and send them to prison. Those who seek to obey you, if their hearts are clean of treachery, grant them sanctuary and impose on them a tax. On artisans and traders, impose a very light burden. Whoever, that you learn, works diligently in construction or in agriculture, grant him dispensation from taxes and be generous to them. Whoever is illuminated by the light of Islam, take only a tenth from their holdings and their income. Whoever continues to follow their religion, take only the tax according to laws of their land - a portion for the Treasury and a portion for their governors.[38]

It is important to underline this notion of "qanūn-i vilayāt" (laws of the land)

36. *ibid.,* 33.

37. *ibid.,* 44.

38. *ibid.,* 167.

inherent in *Chachnama*'s administrative recommendation. It is this same notion that propels Muhammad b. Qasim's treatment of the Jāts:

> Then he called the minister Siāker and Mokā and asked them: "What was the matter of Jāts with Chach and Dāhir? And how was it conducted?" Minister Siāker replied: During the rule of Chach, the Jāts of Lohana, that is those who lived in the area of Lakha and Samma, were prohibited from wearing soft clothes, from covering their heads, and of wearing rough, black, sheet on their torso. When they exited their homes, they were accompanied by dogs; by this, they could be identified from afar. None of their elders could ride a horse. Whenever a king needed a guide, they were called upon to show the way. They indicated the pathways and guided travelers from one tribe to another. And when a leader among them rode a horse, that horse had no saddle or rein. However, he could put a cloth on the back of the horse. If anyone was hurt or killed during travel, it was from them that an investigation was made. And if someone from them was proven to be a thief, his family - including his wife and children - were burned. Caravans traveled by day and night, with them as guides. They do not respect their elders. They are barbaric, prone to rebellion, and thievery on the roads. They were even in Daybul, raiding along with others. They are also responsible for bringing cooking wood to the kitchens of the kings.
>
> Said Muhammad b. Qasim: "How revolting are these people! They are like the jungle dwellers in the lands of *Fars* (Iran) and *Kuhpaia* (base of mountain) who have the same ways."
>
> Hence, Muhammad b. Qasim kept on them their existing laws. Just as during the times of 'Amir al-Mominin 'Umar b. al-Khattāb had insisted that the inhabitants of Syria host any traveller for a night and given food, and if sick, for three nights.[39]

In dealing with the Jāts, *Chachnama* again, layers three levels of history for the audience of the thirteenth century: the precedent of Muhammad b. Qasim, the existing rules of Chach, and then, as a legitimizing force, the prac-

39. *ibid.*, 163-4.

tice of the Rightly Guided Caliph. It is in these ways that *Chachnama* emerges as a hybrid text that represents only the past within which it was composed - the early thirteenth century. Its concerns are the concerns of a locale beset with political and military turmoil. Its intention is to ground the reality into an imagined past - that can provide a sustained, moral universe allowing its rulers and their advisors guidance in their present. The movement of the conquest episode from a simple *akhbār* (report) in al-Balādhurī to a complex and layered take on the similarities and differences that undergird the moral universe of conquest is a deliberate movement, and it shows the central concern of *Chachnama* as a text. It wishes to present a history - akin not only to al-Balādhurī but also to Firdawsī - that shows the necessary ingredients for a just and moral polity. And like Firdawsī, it shows that ruin comes to rulers and their people when they abandon their morals.

3.3.3 *Adāb* in *Chachnama*

Next we will highlight the second narrative structure, the advice - through letters and through speech - sprinkled throughout the *Chachnama*. The genre of 'Mirror for Princes' or *Fürstenspiegel* in Persian Historiography has been abundantly examined in the works of Ann K. S. Lambton and Julie S. Meisami, among others.[40] In its structure, this genre overlaps with works on ethics, governance and history. Though *Chachnama* does not correspond exactly to the structure of advice literature, there are "conversations" between the coun-

40. See Ann K. S. Lambton, "Islamic Mirrors for Princes," *Atti del convegno internazionale sul tema Persia nel Medioevo*, (Mar. - Apr., 1971) and Julie Scott Meisami, *The Sea of Precious Virtues: A Medieval Islamic mirror for princes*, (Salt Lake City: Net Library, 1991)

sellor and the king, as well as *risāla* (epistles) with advice present throughout the text. Additionally, there are only scant references to proverbs or aphorisms and few anecdotes.[41] Still, I would argue, that it inhabits the overall spirit of the genre - highlighting moral, ethical and just solutions to political problems facing the ruler.

Chachnama consists of two concentric cycles: the rise and fall of the Chach dynasty and the arrival and departure of Muhammad b. Qasim to Sindh. Within these mirrored narratives, *Chachnama* proposes a theory of just and legitimate rule, sources of morality, pre-destination and good conduct. Both Chach and Muhammad rise because they are devout, just rulers who pay attention to the needs of the common citizenry. The aristocratic-ministerial model of governance applies in both cycles - the advice of counselors remains the necessary condition for governance. *Chachnama* begins with the arrival of a learned secretary, Chach b. Sila'īj, at the capital of al-Arōr in Sindh. When Chach ascends to the throne, it is because he comes from a family of "ascetics who dedicated their lives to the fire-temples" and has the legitimacy to be the king due to the fact that "it is written in the books of Hind that when a soul spends its time in prayer and ascetic conduct, upon death it is reborn into the body of a King."[42]

However, the earliest elucidation of *Chachnama*'s political theology appears when Chach's minister Budhimān explains to Chach the state of the polity that he now controls:

41. The one explicit proverb being, "You lost your donkey in Constantinople, yet you seek it in Qanauj." Perhaps an early rendering of "dumb ass."

42. *Fathnama-i Sind*, 21.

> The *vizier* (minister) bowed to the ground and said: May Raja Chach live long. Know that this throne and this capital and this sultunate have always remained under one King - and his governors have been faithful and loyal servants. When this *mūmlikāt* (realm) came to Raja Sīhāras Rai and he was defeated by the armies of Fars, then this became the kingship of Rai Sahāsi. He appointed four different governors to each region so that they would dedicate themselves to gathering the taxes and protecting the boundaries. The Raja remained worried about his arrangement and wished to free his mind of such concerns. For this, he ensured that his army was strong and ready. Because if a weakness is not eliminated fully, the passage of time can turn it into a terrifying accident which can no longer be stopped. And when the land is protected and in strong hands, the heart is at ease. And then the neighboring rulers and enemies will also pay attention and come give their respect.
>
> I am hopeful that when you have a strong and brave army with drunk elephants, then you, too, will have peace of mind and the Supreme God will open new venues of conquest and victory for you and subjugate your enemies. I have hope that God will strengthen your rule and the four governors will wear the band of your slavery around their necks and all of your worries will be for naught and the opposing swordsmen will tremble and wear the garland of obedience around their necks. And this great land will prosper under your guidance and by your breath expand. For this to occur, a king must be brave and courageous and obey the command of God, alone. The same God who put you on the throne will also give you the strength to pursue your dreams and your hopes.[43]

The successful ruler, therefore, creates a strong army, installs trusted governors and then deals with his opponents from a position of strength. Hajjaj,[44]

43. *ibid.,* 22-3.

44. As the governor of Iraq, he did not make many friends and his prominent role in the *Chachnama* is rather unique. Contrast, for example, with 'Ali Kufi's contemporary Juzjānī's verdict on Hajjaj in *Tabāqāt-i Nāsirī,* 189: "Hajjaj died in the last years of Wālid. Due to his habit of cruelty and torture, he became an insomniac. When Hajjaj killed Sa'id b. Musīb, who was a *suhāba* (companion of the Prophet), then he lost his sleep. After a sickness of forty days, he died. He killed 120,000 nobles and all were killed outside of the battleground."

who takes on the role of the advisor during Muhammad b. Qasim's cycle of *Chachnama* provides this same advice:

> In the Name of God, the Most Merciful and Benevolent. Dear son, what is the matter with you? Why are you so reluctant to use your intellect and your reason in your service? I only hope that you overcome all the kings of the East and destroy the cities of the unbelievers. Why are you reluctant to succeed in this endeavor? And overcome the evil of the enemies? I am hopeful that all of their plans will come to naught. They are planning to defeat the army of Islam, you keep your heart strong and whatever you need to spend, spend it. Shower his (Dāhir's) enemies with gifts and grants.
>
> Whoever asks for a land grant or a governorship, do not make them hopeful. Instead, agree to them and sooth them with your commands and your agreements. Because there are four ways of becoming a king: first, peace, compassion, civility and companionship. Second, by spending wealth and granting gifts. Third, by understanding the proper reasons for their enmity and investigating their nature. Fourth, by fear, terror, courage, and strength.
>
> Dispatch your enemies by any means. When governors appear in front of you, agree with their just demands. When they announce taxes on themselves, accept them with grace and accept all that they send to the Treasury. Keep every one calm.[45]

One crucial lesson in *Chachnama* is to negotiate only from a position of strength - Muhammad b. Qasim is repeatedly advised to grant mercy only after he has killed all military personnel or destroyed the inhabitations of the army. He is told, by Hajjaj, to offer sanctuary on his own terms alone. Read within the historical realities of Qabacha, these constructions of political advice could not be clearer in setting up a strict hierarchy of power relationships and the position of the monarch at the center.

45. *ibid.,* 94-5.

To highlight the use of anecdote, let us look at one of the very few such instances in *Chachnama*. This occurs during the final phases of the Chach dynasty - when Dāhir is preparing to commit the moral crime of marrying his own sister, in order to keep the throne. He is concerned that such an act would repulse his nobles and they will revolt against him. His minister Budhimān decides to conduct an experiment:

> When minister Budhimān returned home, he called for a sheep and covered its back in earth and mustard seeds and watered it day and night, until the flowers bloomed. Then he let the sheep out of the house and everyone, big and small, town-dwellers and villagers, looked at it in great wonder. Until three days had passed and the sheep continued to wander the town, and all forgot it. The minister said, "O King! Whatever the rumor is, it only stays on tongues for three days. After that, no one remembers its good or evil. Since you do not want to give up the throne and your heart is set on this matter. These people will not revolt against you. Hence, you should simply do it."[46]

With this advice, Dāhir marries his sister and the cycle of Chach's dynasty begins its decline. *Chachnama* does not comment directly on the immorality of his action, but in the letter of Muhammad b. Qasim to Dāhir, it is made clear that the fall of the Chach dynasty was brought about, in part, due to this immoral act. As we turn to the last narrative layer in *Chachnama* we will discuss - the *hikayāt* (story) - it is worth noting that the story of Dāhir's marriage to his sister is one of the set-pieces used to illustrate the power - constitutive and destructive - of the feminine agents.

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46. *ibid.,* 41.

3.3.4 *Hikayāt* in *Chachnama*

This third narrative layer of *Chachnama*, though scant, is perhaps the most conspicuous in the text. While *Chachnama* begins a number of reports with some form of attestation that it is a *hikayāt* - "compilers of stories," "tellers of tales say," "narrators of stories quote" - in a general pattern of aggregating or generalizing the sources; there are only a limited number of "tales" or "stories" that stand out in the narrative. Partly because *Chachnama* succeeds brilliantly in meshing such elements within the other narrative layers but also because *Chachnama* does not explicitly want to draw attention to its story-telling. Still, *hikayāt* as a function of *story-telling* emerges in two themes: episodes of romantic love and seduction, and the supernatural. Let us take the latter theme, first.

The voice of the supernatural in *Chachnama* is usually the voice of prognostication: the astrologers and soothsayers. In one episode a magician (*sāhirā*) uses her abilities to confirm for the people of al-Arōr that Dāhir had indeed been killed by the invading army. In another, Hajjaj has a dream about the death of a commander before the news reached him and he prophesies to the people of Kufa that it will be Muhammad b. Qasim, who will conquer Sindh. These episodes give us a tantalizing glimpse into the social functions of the supernatural in early thirteenth century Sindh - from the prophetic power of dreams to the cross-denominational belief in pre-destination.

However, I would like to focus on two set-pieces that frame the divine hierarchy of *Chachnama* and give the listener/reader a sense of how the godly world is structured - through the stories of Chach and Muhammad b. Qasim

- linking history, advice and story-telling. These two episodes also serve as an introduction to the main set-piece of the *Chachnama* and its most explicit (and greatest) story: the death of Muhammad b. Qasim. They establish the clear hierarchy that *Chachnama* constructs between the theists in Sindh. Chach himself is from a priestly family, and is often referred to as a "Brahmin." Next are the *samāni,* which are understood to be Buddhists in Persian sources. The third category, of course, are the Muslims.[47]

The first *hikayāt* to highlight is the encounter between the Brahmin Chach and a *nasīk samāni* (Buddhist caretaker/monk) who resisted the attempts of Chach to conquer Brahmanabad. He was known as *budh rakūh* (One who protects the Buddha) and had elaborate spells that kept Chach from claiming the fort for over a year. This enraged Chach who vowed to "skin him and send his skin to the royal drummers so that they can stretch it across their drums and beat on it every day"[48] After the fort fell, Chach gathered his armed troops and rode towards the temple. On the way, he told them that he would go into the temple alone. Upon his return, they were to watch for his signal, and once given, fall upon the monk and kill him.

With all this arranged, Chach enters the temple grounds and finds the monk sitting, constructing and stamping miniature clay idols. After letting him stand for an hour, the monk finally looks at Chach and says: "Ah. The son of Sil'āij the monk is here. What do you want?" Chach sits down and explains

47. Incidentally, only in one instance are the Muslims shown being externally referred to: Dāhir's wife Ladi calls the invading Muslims, an army of "chanḍalān gao-khawār" (lowest caste cow-eaters). This "insult" is repeated once again but draws no rebuke from Muhammad b. Qasim. *ibid.* 147.

48. *ibid.* 30.

that he would like to have the monk involved in daily administration of the city and help with the task of rebuilding it after this war. The monk refuses Chach's offer, saying that his concerns are only with God and not with the king. They debate this for a while and finally, Chach asks if he could, at least, give a grant to the monk. The monk refuses even this. Chach then asks if he could give a grant to the temple. The monk replies: "Only if your intention is good and for charity. This temple of *Budh* called *kanohar* is ancient and it is in ruins from the passage of time. Rebuild it and spend your money on this task and you will, in this manner, help me." Chach agrees. Then:

> Chach climbs his horse and returns. The minister says: "O King! I saw a strange thing." He asks, "What?" Minister replies: "The king was determined to kill that monk and had ordered sword-bearers to draw their swords. But when you reached him, you fell to asking his pleasure. And accepted his request." Chach says: "Yes. I saw a strange vision which had no magic or trickery in it. And when I saw it, I saw in it clear signs. When I sat in front of the monk, I saw a vision - terrifying and horrific - which stood behind him. Its eyes were red like fire, its lips were thick and hung, its teeth were sharp like knives. In its hand it carried a mace of silver, raised as if to strike. I was frightened from that vision and did not dare speak as I had spoken earlier. I was afraid for my life, and left as soon as I could, giving the grants that I could."[49]

The presence of the supernatural in the natural world is highlighted in the two encounters of Muhammad b. Qasim inside temples. Note, in the first instance, the similarity in the "eyes" to the Chach story:

> Muhammad b. Qasim entered the temple with his assistants and his commanders. They saw an image which was made of gold and had two eyes glowing red like rubies. Muhammad b. Qasim thought this to be a man. And he unsheathed his sword and stepped forward to strike it. The Brahmin care-taker of the *buṭ* said: O Just

49. *ibid.* 32.

> Commander! This is an idol made by Jabūn."[50]

On a narrative level, this clearly connects the cycles of Chach and Muhammad. The next encounter allows *Chachnama* to demonstrate the superiority of Muhammad b. Qasim's theism:

> When Muhammad b. Qasim entered the fort, all of the city dwellers gathered at the temple of *Nau Bahār* and prostrated themselves and began to worship the idol. Muhammad b. Qasim inquired, 'Whose house is it where all men, great and common, are praying next to each other and prostrating themselves?' They replied, "It is a temple (*būt kuda*) which they call *Nau Bahār*." Then Muhammad b. Qasim ordered the temple doors opened and he entered it with his nobles. He saw an image, made of marble, seated on a horse, on whose wrist were bracelets of gold and rubies. He called out to the caretakers, and asked, "Is this your *sanām* (idol)?" They said, "Yes. Except his wrist had two bracelets. We only see one, now." Muhammad b. Qasim said, "Can't the one you worship (*mābud*) even know where his bracelet went?" The caretaker lowered his head. Muhammad b. Qasim laughed and returned the bracelet.[51]

As we can see, *Chachnama* contains a somewhat vague cosmology of beliefs wherein the Muslim domination is explicit, yet dialogical. It acknowledges other theists, granting them special knowledge, rules and imaginations. These "faith" encounters are explicitly separated from the militarily and politically determined encounters. The domination over the sacred spaces of the vanquished is imagined as constitutive part of military supremacy. *Chachnama* endorses such appropriations.[52]

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50. *ibid.,* 184.

51. *ibid.* 172.

52. Al-Ṭabarī, for example, contains numerous encounters of mosques built on the sites of churches, during the conquest of Syria.

Turning now to romantic love, seduction and the involvement of women in the world of *Chachnama*, we can make a few brief points. Nearly every incident of romance depicted in *Chachnama* occurs within a political context. The first is the seduction of a young Chach at the hands of the queen Sunān Deo, though he resists sexual temptation until after they are married. His sexual abstinence is something that proves him morally superior and allows him to become the king. Sunān Deo is not without agentive powers either - not only does she approach him, initially but she also masterminds his accession to the throne. Though *Chachnama* casts her as callous, calculating and morally reprehensible through her actions.[53] Yet, it cannot be denied that *Chachnama* provides her with ample space to demonstrate her intelligence and her power - she out-maneouvers all the nobles of the realm. Such ambivalence towards the power of feminine wiles continues in the episode of Dāhir's son Jaysīnha's encounter with the daughter of the neighboring king. Again, Jaysīnha resists sexual advances from the young girl - proving himself to be of a morally superior fiber.

However, these earlier episodes are mere footwork for the grand finale of *Chachnama* - the death of Muhammad b. Qasim, a narrative forever cemented it in the historical memory of the region.

53. Such an understanding of the feminine is in accordance with the *adāb* literature from the eleventh century onward, from Nizam ul-Mulk's *Siyasatnama* to Sa'di's *Gulistān*. See Leela Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) and Minoo Southgate, "Men, Women and Boys: Love and Sex in the Works of Sa'di." *Iranian Studies* 17: 413-452.

The End of Muhammad b. Qasim

To fully comprehend the argument behind the narrative of Muhammad b. Qasim's death, we have to step back and see the entirety of the portrait of Muhammad b. Qasim as sketched in *Chachnama*. The clearest assessment of Muhammad b. Qasim occurs half-way through the narrative, after he has conquered the fort of al-Arōr, "The people of the fort, noble and common, said: We had heard of Muhammad b. Qasim's honesty, devotion, empathy, justice and compassion, and his forthrightness and now we have seen it, too."[54] These traits are highlighted in various episodes, in Muhammad b. Qasim's dealings with soldiers, with fort governors, with Dāhir and his family, with nobles, and with religious notables. However, the one over-arching feature embodied in Muhammad b. Qasim is fealty to his governor, Hajjaj - clearly illustrated in *Chachnama*'s account of the fall of Daybul, when he waits to attack until the word comes from Hajjaj.

Again and again, Muhammad b. Qasim is shown to surrender his own feelings and judgements to those of his superiors in the chain of command. He is chastised for granting too many pardons, he is chastised for bestowing grants on local nobles and trusting them with their own troops in his armies, he is chastised for not inflicting higher taxes. In all, he quietly agrees, even as *Chachnama* continues to build up his steadfast righteousness.

In the climax, it is this same quality, of belief in the righteousness of the central powers that proves to brings his end. Here, then, are the events that

54. *ibid.*, 170.

lead to Muhammad b. Qasim's death:

Orders from the Capital to Muhammad b. Qasim: The next day, when the king of stars emerged from the veil of the night, a courier with a letter from the Capital arrived. Muhammad b. Ali and 'Abu'l Hasan Madā'inī narrate thusly: At the time of Raja Dāhir's killing, two of his young daughters were captured in the interior of his palace. Muhammad b. Qasim sent them, along with some African slaves, to the Caliph in Baghdad. The Caliph dispatched them to the harem so that they may recover from the journey and be able to join him in his chambers. After a few days, the thought of them crossed the Caliph's mind and he ordered them both that night. When they arrived, Walid b. Abd al-Malik asked the translator to find out who was eldest of the two, so that she may be kept and the younger sister called for at a different occasion. The translator first inquired their names. The eldest said, "My name is Suria Deo" and the younger one said, "My name is Pirmal Deo." At this, the Caliph called the elder one, and gestured for the younger one to be taken away.

As soon as she was seated and her face was brought to light, the Caliph was struck by her beauty and grace and his bleeding heart could no longer remain patient. He grabbed Suria Deo with his hand and pulled her towards him but she suddenly stood up and said: "May you live long, O King. This delicate slave is not worthy of the King's night since the Commander of the Just, Imāduddin Muhammad b. Qasim kept us with him for three days. And then sent us forward to your service. Is such your custom? Such indignities should not come to Kings." The Caliph, at that moment, had lost his senses in the turmoils of desire and the reins of patience had slipped from his hands. His pride prevented him from investigating and confirming her account. Immediately he called for ink and paper and with his own hand wrote a command that wherever Muhammad b. Qasim be when he receives this order, he must have himself sewn in leather and shipped to the Capital.

The Order is received by Muhammad b. Qasim when he reached Odhapur: When Muhammad b. Qasim received the order in the city of Odhapur, then he ordered himself to be sewn inside uncured leather and stuffed in a box and shipped to the Capital. Muhammad b. Qasim gave his life to his maker and those that he had appointed, remained at their positions. And he was taken,

in the box, to the Caliph of the time. The chamberlain called upon King Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān to come, as Muhammad b. Qasim had arrived. The Caliph asked: "Is he dead or alive?" They replied: "May God extend the Caliph's life. When he received the command at Odhapur, he ordered himself to be sewn in uncured leather and after two days, he gave his life up to the maker. And the nobles and governors that he appointed continue to control the region and they have proclaimed the *khūtba* as ordered by the Capital."

The Caliph opens the Box: Then the Caliph opened the box and ordered the veiled women to come out. And with a stalk of myrtle in his hand, he touched Muhammad b. Qasim's teeth and said: "O daughters of the Raja: See how my commands are obeyed by my commanders. This is why they await in obedience. As soon as he received my order in Qanauj, he gave his life for me."

Dāhir's daughter Changi speaks with Caliph Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān: At this the veiled Changi removed her veil and bowed to the ground: "May God keep the King safe for ever and may his rule remain for ages. It is necessary for the wise ruler of the time to weigh what he hears from friend or foe, on the scale of intellect and compare it to the decisions of the heart. Then he is free from doubt, he must go to the scales of Justice and proclaim his orders so that the wrath of *Yazdān* may spare him and his people may not fault him. Your command does hold sway. But it lacks true understanding. In the ways of our honor, Muhammad b. Qasim was like a brother or son to us and never extended a hand of desire towards us. But he killed the king of Hind and Sindh, and destroyed the rulership of my forefathers and made us slaves.

"For this, we sought our revenge on him. To ruin him and to seek appropriate revenge, we lied in front of the Caliph. Our purpose was successful. And through lie and treachery we gathered our revenge and the Caliph's orders were fulfilled. If this Caliph did not have desire clouding his mind, he would have investigated prior to issuing his command, and today, he would not be in this place of shame and dishonor. And if Muhammad b. Qasim had used his intellect, he would have walked until one day's journey and then had himself sewn in leather. When investigated, he would have been set free and not ruined." At hearing this, the Caliph was awash in sorrow and bit the back of his hand.

> **Changi continues her Speech:** When the veiled Changi looked at the Caliph, she saw that his anger had reached its height. She said, "The King made a grave error. He killed such a man for the sake of two slave girls, the likes of whom he imprisoned thousands of. And who took the thrones of 70 kings of Hind and Sindh and put them into coffins. At the sites of temples, he constructed mosques and minarets. Even if he had made a mistake, or an error in judgement, even than a selfish person would not have killed Muhammad b. Qasim." The Caliph ordered that the two daughters be cemented in walls. From that day to this, the flag of Islam continues to unfurl over this land.[55]

It would be superfluous to point out to *Chachnama*'s account does not conform with pre-existing sources - since, we have already established that *Chachnama* is not a history.[56] Even so, the anachronistic mistakes cannot mask the sheer narrative force of this set-piece. Where this depiction of Muhammad b. Qasim's death fails as *tarīkh*, as *hikayāt* it works brilliantly - by reinforcing the theme of feminine deviousness, and the danger of seeking sexual gratification.[57] As *adāb* it teaches the ruler the necessity to contemplate his actions, and not to give in to his baser instincts. But more than anything else, through this depiction of the end of Muhammad b. Qasim, *Chachnama* recommends a clear break from the central regnal authority of Islam - the Caliph. Through-

55. *ibid.,* 187-90.

56. For a thorough vetting of the 'historicity' of this account, see N. A. Baloch, "End of Imad-ud-din Muhammad ibn Qasim, the Arab Conqueror of Sind," *Islamic Culture,* vol. 19 no. 1 (1945): 54-66.

57. In this it seems to turn back into metaphor the "poison-tongue damsels," from Firdawsī's *Shahnama* as well as the *Secretum Secretorum*, who tried to kill Alexander in their sweet embrace. See Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, "The Vish-Kanyâ or Poison-damsels of Ancient India, Illustrated by the story of Susan Râmashgar in the Persian Burzo-Nâmeh" *Folklore,* vol. 38, no. 4 (1927): 324-37. For another transmission of this story, see Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rapaccini's Daughter" *Mosses from an Old Manse* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1846)

out the narrative, Muhammad b. Qasim is shown to hew closely to the orders from the Capital. He repeatedly suspends his decisions and awaits confirmations from Hajjaj. The tragedy of his noble death, then, is an explication of the moral decay at the center. By staying true to his superior's commands, he leaves unfinished his own work, and the good work of the conquest of Hind and Sind. The unsaid, but easily understood, lesson being that Muhammad b. Qasim would have fared better by breaking the chain of command.

Within the political structure espoused by the *Chachnama*, the persistence of a moral and ethical alignment with earthly power cannot be over-stressed. The decline and fall of Chach's dynasty occurs because of the moral failings of Dāhir. Similarly, the end of Muhammad b. Qasim occurs because the Caliph is now a debased and immoral ruler who is concerned more with his lust and his ego than the righteousness of his duties. It is not a stretch to argue, then, that a political detachment from the central authorities would have saved Muhammad b. Qasim's life. Read within the framework of Qabacha's strife with Iltutmish and Yildiz, *Chachnama* becomes an apologia for secession and independence from the corrupt center and an invitation to constitute a new world on the frontier.

3.4 The Long Thirteenth Century of the *Chachnama*

Chachnama is an explicitly imagined - and constructed past - for the Muslim rulers and citizens of Sindh at a time of great political upheaval. In this, it remains an unprecedented text. The work of imagining a past, and invent-

ing a tradition, has been argued to be one of the categories exclusive to the modern nation-state. It is the nation-state which is said to construct, out of myth, a history for its collective, which in turn is reified and memorialized within its citizenry. It is perhaps lamentable that the scholarly attention on tracing the mechanics of such historical constructions have rarely lingered on the pre-modern period, unless to trace these constructions into their mythic pasts. Neither has any attempt made to situate it in a context other than the nation-state. A text such as the *Chachnama* has the ability to transcend the ancient/modern or classical/vernacular divide. It can be read within its own site of production as a particular act of agentive politics, with its own specific political and social goals. It also refocuses our attention on the regional framework - in this case, the internal frontier of Sindh.

Chachnama provides an alternate source of political legitimacy - through a fairly creative re-construction of a distant path - by connecting the Turkic rulers of Sindh with the Muslim conquest of the eighth century. It allows the possibility for Qabacha to distance himself from Ghazna by modeling himself on the earliest Muslim conquest. It posits a space, where Islamic ideals and pragmatic political realities can co-exist. The absence of explicit historical time, or at least the mashing of various teleologies, furthers this sense of telescoping a historical moment across five centuries - of creating a new historical memory for the Muslim inhabitants of this region. It is remarkable, yet so rarely remarked upon, that *Chachnama* obliterates all Islamic pasts for the sake of making this radically new present possible. Gone are the long narratives of Prophetic traditions, the life of the Prophet himself, and the detailed doings of the Caliphs in Medina, Damascus or Baghdad. Unlike its contem-

porary works, *Chachnama* does not seek legitimacy through the linkage of the current ruler with the 'Abbasids. Instead, it makes an argument for an ethical and moral universe and links governance to those ideals. In its moral cadence, it is triumphantly Arab and Sunni, but in its political cosmology, it is decidedly pragmatic.

Chachnama, then, is a regional configuration of a center-frontier tension, located specifically in the early thirteenth century world of Qabacha and Iltutmish. It is precisely this regional configuration that accounts for the persistence of *Chachnama* in the political history and memory of Sindh. For centuries, we find its echoes in popular memory, whenever political turmoil grips this region anew. From Akbar's invasion of Sindh, to the British invasion to the Partition of 1947 - each moment of crisis, heralds a return to understand the tumultuous past of this region, and *Chachnama* becomes the obvious, first step.

Chachnama is a regional history: it begins with its center in al-Arōr and never leaves Sindh. This makes it the very first localization of Islam's universal history and, as such, highly influential. Again, it is worth thinking about the conceptual geography that emerges from within *Chachnama* and what we can decipher of the thirteenth century through it. *Chachnama* argues for a sustained cultural engagement with Islam's Others in the region. It posits four "corners" of the region - all bordering non-Muslim kings. Within the text, it demonstrates how a just King (first Chach, and then Muhammad) would need to control everything *up to* the border of the region and from that point, exert dominion and influence on his neighbors. It shows the creation of agree-

ments and partnerships between the varied faiths and it provides a framework within which Islam's universalism can exist as regionalism. What makes such a narrative possible, is the position of Sindh itself as a frontier filled with possibilities. Far from the capitals of Baghdad, Ghazna, and removed even from the new bases in Lahore and Multan, Uch̤ harbored a conceptual geography where new possibilities could emerge. Obsessed as it is with boundaries, it is easy to read *Chachnama* as a frontier text - making an argument for its own centrality. *Chachnama* has never been considered a "classical" text but it should be afforded renewed literary and historical attention for what it reveals about a moment of possibility in a remote frontier of empires.

If a memory of Muhammad b. Qasim persists in Sindh's historical consciousness, it is because of the *Chachnama*. Where later histories took up, expanded or edited, the stories of Islam's arrival in India or the life of Muhammad b. Qasim, they relied solely on the *Chachnama*. The Arabic sources, al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī etc., remained inaccessible until the modern era. As we move forward to the discussion of the evolution of Muhammad b. Qasim from the *Chachnama*, it is important to re-state the intimate bonds between text and their sites of production - the idea of Sindh as an internal frontier consistently renewing the engagement of its past with its political present. On the historiographical scale, it is evident that *Chachnama* was a central text within the regional histories even as the classical Indo-Persian histories took little notice of it.[58] This regional focus ensured that over the next eight hundred years, *Chachnama* did not fade from their pages, with the themes of *Chachnama* persisting. This frontier history - with a unique hope of creating

58. The exception is Firishtā.

a new center, with new allegiances, and new partners - may have failed to break into the classical canon of Indo-Persian historiography. The courtly medieval and early modern histories continued to pay scant attention to matters of Sindh. But the writing of a history of Sindh, of Islam's arrival, remained intimately tied to the need of the region to render anew their significance in the greater cosmology. The tense relationships between the frontier and the metropole kept the history and memory of Muhammad b. Qasim alive, until it entered the charged field of British colonial historiography.

CHAPTER 4

REPRESENTATIONS OF MUHAMMAD B. QASIM

4.0.1 The Historical Muhammad b. Qasim

Who is the historical Muhammad b. Qasim? Before we embark on an examination of the many representations of Muhammad b. Qasim through colonial and postcolonial periods, it would be prudent to re-state our findings. Our earliest, and fullest, textual source is al-Balādhurī (d. 892) who wrote his account of the Arab conquest of Sindh nearly 130 years after the fact. He cites as his authority al-Madā'inī (d. 843), who could have gathered this history from a participant or descendant of a participant of the army which accompanied Muhammad b. Qasim. There is no epigraphic or numismatic evidence that gets us any closer to the historical Muhammad b. Qasim. With those source deficiencies in mind, here is what we can say about Muhammad b. Qasim.

He belonged to the northern Arabian tribe of Thakīf and was born in the city of Tā'if around 693 or 694. The Thakīf were close commercial partners with the Quraysh and feature prominently in the Prophet's life. They remained an important presence during the Umayyad rule, with many governors, administrators and commanders in their ranks. The most prominent Thakīfi of the era was the governor of Iraq, Hajjaj b. Yusuf. Muhammad's father, al-Qāsim,

was a cousin of Hajjaj. He was sent, al-Balādhurī notes, to the frontier of Fārs, in 709-10. In their entry on the founding of Shiraz, the geographers Ibn-Istikarī and Ibn Hawqal credit Muhammad b. Qasim as planning and establishing the city - though, it is possible that Muhammad b. Yusuf, Hajjaj's brother, could be the responsible party, since he was a governor of Yemen under 'Abd al-Malik. He was seventeen years of age at the time.

In al-Balādhurī's narrative, Muhammad follows orders from Hajjaj precisely, he deals swiftly with resisting forces and is quick to establish administrative posts in the forts he conquers - in succession, Daybul, Nerūn, Sihwān, Brahmanabad, Hirawal, al-Arōr, and Multan. When he is re-called back to the capital, al-Balādhurī hints that Muhammad was already in the good graces of the local inhabitants, "The people of al-Hind cried at his arrest and erected a statue of him in *al-Kirāj*." It is during his imprisonment at Wāsit, that we receive the only glimpse of Muhammad b. Qasim, in the verses he recites:

> They wasted me, and a precious thing they wasted,
> On the day of struggle and defense of the frontier.
> Though I am imprisoned in Wāsit and its land
> in irons, twisted
> I fought many youths of Persia
> And many a brave I slaughtered.
> If I had decided to stay
> Many a horse was prepared for battle
> and mares. And the horsemen of Saksak would not have entered
> our land

And no ‘Aki would rule over me

And I would not be a slave to a Mazuni slave

Curse you, O Time, who destroys the world?[1]

These sorrowful verses portray a commander who deliberately chose not to resist, even though he had the power to do so. It is obvious that al-Balādhurī is fairly sympathetic to this young conqueror - giving him a number a verses in a very brief section. Muhammad b. Qasim died in that prison in Wāsit in 715.

That is the extent of our knowledge of the historical Muhammad b. Qasim, based on the earliest known sources. He left no material history - no coins were issued in Sindh bearing his name, no epigraphic or inscriptional evidence links him to the sites either. His character, much as it can be gleaned from the brief narrative of al-Balādhurī does not distinguish him among the many other commanders of Muslim armies from the earliest expeditions. In fact, in the lineup of renowned Muslim conquerors from early Islam, Khālid b. al-Walīd (Iraq and Syria), Amr b. al-Ās (Egypt), Tarīq b. Ziyād (Spain), Uqba b. Nāfi al-Fihri (North Africa), and Qutayba b. Muslim (Khurāsān), Muhammad b. Qasim remains the least visible to history. The facts of his being related to a powerful administrator, his appointment as a commander, and his subsequent incarceration and death at the hands of the new regime, are all prototypical details that overlap his biography with numerous others - especially Qutayba b. Muslim. Yet, unlike Qutayba b. Muslim, there were no volumes of poetry written to his memory, nor were his heroic acts or his

1. Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān,* 424.

family immortalized in biographical dictionaries. This is not a surprising fact, given the fact that Sindh was a distant frontier in the Arab Muslim imagination, and his conquest but one episode in over seventy years of campaigns.

But perhaps it is this very skeletal nature of his history that appealed to 'Ali Kufi when he decided to narrate the history of Islam's arrival in Sindh. A fuller figure from those earlier campaigns would have resisted 'Ali Kufi's attempts to construct a new space of decentralized, moral political authority on the frontier. His intimations of rescuing a "long lost" history from the cloak of darkness are, metaphorically speaking, the construction of a new history of Islam. It is *Chachnama*, then, that sets the template for the heroic mythology of Muhammad b. Qasim to follow.

4.1 The Loyal Commander

As we have already seen, Muhammad b. Qasim is one of the two central characters in *Chachnama*, modeling the characteristics of a just and moral founder of a new polity for Sunni Muslims in Sindh. Two central facts of his biography, that he was of a celebrated Arab clan and that he was a Sunni, are never explicitly expressed but they are the unmistakable basis for his narrative in the *Chachnama*. 'Ali Kufi intended to de-emphasize not only the court in Ghazni but the Isma'īlī presence in Sindh by narrating *this particular* portrayal of Islam's arrival. As such, his construction of Muhammad b. Qasim has two overarching themes: his loyalty to his superiors, specifically Hajjaj b. Yusuf and his accommodation of local nobility as rulers and administrators.

Chachnama expands these themes throughout the text - in his letters to Hajjaj, his speeches to his troops, his alliances and grants to local nobles, and his behavior towards civilians and prisoners of war.

Chachnama was composed almost five hundred years after the events of Muhammad b. Qasim's life and, though it utilizes some historical and literary works, is entirely a product of the early thirteenth century. Building upon the meager information in al-Balādhurī, 'Ali Kufi portrays Muhammad b. Qasim as an exemplar commander, a devout Muslim, and, above all, a loyal servant. These themes are established from the moment Muhammad b. Qasim is introduced in the text:[2]

> These who testify to these reports and those who explain the remains say that when the Capital gave over the affairs of Sindh to Hajjaj b. Yusuf, he called Muhammad b. Qasim, son of his uncle, his son-in-law as the daughter of Hajjaj was in his house, and appointed him the governor over the region of Hind. He was seventeen years of age. In praise of his appointment, the poet Hamza al-Hanāfi said these verses:
>
> Gratitude, Forgiveness and generosity
> Were in Muhammad b. al-Qāsim bin Muhammad
> Commanding armies at the age of seventeen
> How close was his command to his birth. [3]

It should be noted that these verses are quoted by al-Balādhurī, as well, but as panegyric to Muhammad b. Qasim's death. Here again, we observe the way in which *Chachnama* reconstructs a narrative using *tar'īkh* from earlier sources. This early declaration of Muhammad b. Qasim's character - his gratitude, forgiveness and generosity - are built upon in the narrative through

2. *Fathnama,* 68.

3. *Fathnama Sind,* 103.

dual means: the actions taken by Muhammad b. Qasim and the letters exchanged between Muhammad b. Qasim and Hajjaj b. Yusuf. In essence, the text provides instant meta-commentary on the deeds of Muhammad b. Qasim, framing them within the *adāb* forms and picking up on themes for emphasis.

The Loyalty and Devotion of Muhammad b. Qasim

For eight days, Muhammad b. Qasim waits for permission from Hajjaj to launch his first attack on the fort at Daybul. It is very early in the *Chachnama* that the micro-management of Hajjaj b. Yusuf is made clear. On every key decision - to launch an attack, to give amnesty, to impose taxes, to form alliance, to appoint governors - Muhammad b. Qasim defers to orders from the *dar ul-khilāfa* (house of the caliphate). In all, *Chachnama* contains twenty one letters written from Hajjaj b. Yusuf's point of view to Muhammad b. Qasim. Every single one contains explicit instructions - the effect of which is always the resulting action taken by Muhammad b. Qasim. These letters contain a mixture of military or administrative orders along with strategic and advisory details. Taken at face value, the close correspondence between Muhammad b. Qasim's actions and the missives from Hajjaj illustrates a loyal commander *par excellence.* The ultimate display of his loyalty being his voluntarily submitting to have himself sewn into leather and shipped to the capital. He is perfectly attuned to the goals of the campaign - which is to conquer the entirety of Hind and Sindh - in accordance with divine will. As Hajjaj notes in a letter, "I believe that the time of the unbelievers is now over and prosperity

has turned away from them and the way, the truth, and the reality of Islam are now the order of the day."[4] Accordingly, it is made abundantly clear that Muhammad b. Qasim acts in accordance with God's plan. His devotion and his piety are added character traits emphasized in *Chachnama* - with one key moment of expressive religiosity. Near Nirūn, the Muslim army cannot get access to water and is slowly running out of solutions as the troops begin to complain. Muhammad b. Qasim prays and asks God, "Oh listener of woes and solver of hurdles, for the sake of *Bismillah al-Rahman ar-Rahim* help us." Immediately, it starts raining."[5] This "miracle" fits within *Chachnama*'s political theology, which relies heavily on a moral universe founded in Islam's teaching, but, it also reinforces the basic righteousness of Muhammad b. Qasim.

However, there are hidden hints that Muhammad b. Qasim is a man of his own mind - and it is *that* subtle contrast that makes *Chachnama*'s appeal for a new de-centralized political landscape. Hajjaj is not thrilled with all of the local allegiances Muhammad is making, and he berates Muhammad in a letter:

> I do not like your ways. And I am surprised at your governance. You seem to really want to grant amnesty. Before being tested, the enemy who appeals for peace or declares intention to fight cannot be treated equally as the good and the bad do not deserve similar treatments. By doing so, you only prove the lack of intelligence and the enemy will take advantage of that. I swear on my head and my life that God has given you the ability to think but you do not utilize it and your entire attention is geared towards giving

4. *ibid.,* 112.

5. *ibid.,* 86.

everyone amnesty.[6]

This conflict between Hajjaj and Muhammad, can be examined in a number of ways - as political theory, as a theological debate, as decisions on the ground etc. In essence, it reveals a bifurcated universe - a central, metropole where the ultimate goal is domination and conquest and a frontier, where co-habitation and co-operation have higher strategic value. Through Muhammad b. Qasim, the *Chachnama* presents both a negative and a positive model of behavior for Qabacha in the thirteenth century: On the negative side, Muhammad represents the dangers of unquestioning fealty not to the God Above but to a transient power in the Capital. On the positive side, Muhammad shows the possibilities of creating a new polity at the frontier and creating new networks, new loci of legitimation. These are the underlying bases of *Chachnama*. As a text, then, it is intimately tied to the site of its production, and the political realities of early thirteenth century Ucḥ. As we trace the representation of Muhammad b. Qasim forward through time, it is important to keep in mind that these same sets of forces continue to act on those texts.

The Accommodation of Muhammad b. Qasim

Muhammad b. Qasim appoints local governors, takes on local advisors, grants status and riches to nobles with whom he signs accords, engages in dialogues with the religious establishments, entrusts local administration to

6. *ibid.*, 113.

local elite, upholds social, cultural and religious practices, and, in essence, legitimizes non-Islamic practices across his domain. We have already seen a few examples of this in the previous chapter. A crystallization of Muhammad b. Qasim's strategy of accommodation appears early in the *Chachnama* in a letter he writes to Hajjaj. This letter clarifies the inevitability of Muslim domination, the pious belief in Islam's triumph and the political necessity of having a fair and just relationship with the non-Muslims. There is an inherent contradiction in those two tenets, and it is instructive how *Chachnama* navigates it. The letter, written right before the final confrontation between Dāhir and the Muslim armies, begins with the usual gestures towards the munificence of Hajjaj b. Yusuf, "the protector of 'Ajam and Hind." Next, he relates the news that the forts in Sīstān and Sīsām have been conquered and, "in place of the temples of the unbelievers, we have constructed mosques, appointed imams and held prayers." He then describes the fort against which the armies are aligned as one "of whose construction, even Sikander Rumi (Alexander the Roman) would be proud." After a quotation from the Qur'an regarding the inevitability of the doom facing the unbelievers, Muhammad b. Qasim turns to the matter at hand:

> The Amir should be informed about one of the governors of Dāhir, who controls the island of *cutch* in the Mehran, and has the fort of *bhēt* in his command, and who is known as Basamī b. Rāsil. A number of kings of Hind and Sindh are close to him and have given him their strict allegiance. They will not dismiss his opinions. Those in Daybul who agreed to work with us, have informed us that this man is our well-wisher, and is disposed towards making a *ba'iyāt* (pact) with us. He has asked us to sign a promissory note with him. If the Great God has created this opportunity, and he joins us, it will make our crossing of the Mehran an easier task and

God will make all tasks easy and right.[7]

It is this crucial understanding of political realities that distinguishes Muhammad b. Qasim's conduct with Sindhi populations and their leaders. Again, *Chachnama* stresses the many relationships Muhammad b. Qasim builds with the local nobility - such as Kāka b. Kotal, a Rajput noble and Kāksu, a counsellor - who help him, and who are rewarded with riches, robes and honorifics. This accommodation, this ability to make political alliances, works in a complementary fashion with Islam's divine supremacy over all other faiths. Again and again, in every fort, the local soothsayers and astrologers come to tell Muhammad b. Qasim of his pre-ordained conquest over their lands. Their prophecies provide a clear choice to the local rulers, including Dāhir: accept the plans of the stars, and let Muhammad b. Qasim grant you peace and prosperity, or resist and perish. Such manifestation of a divine plan not only spur the local rulers to help Muhammad b. Qasim but they make it a *moral* necessity. After all, the task of the ruler is to prevent hardships on his people, and resisting the Muslims guaranteed such hardships.

At the fort of Nirūn, where the Raja refuses to succumb, the "artisans, farmers and masoners" come out of the fort to plead their case, independently, to Muhammad b. Qasim.[8] In episodes such as that, the *Chachnama* makes it clear that the primary concern of the conqueror is not the conquest but the well-being of the population, and Muhammad b. Qasim guarantees the inhabitants that they will not be punished for the sins of their ruler. Similarly,

7. *ibid.,* 106.

8. *ibid.,* 107.

in the granting of dispensation to the priests in Brahmanabad from taxes, or the continuation of the policies on Jāts, Muhammad b. Qasim is shown to be sensitive to the local histories and traditions. One key violence remains: the foundation of mosques in the stead of temples. Here, *Chachnama* builds upon the conception of sacred spaces, and their appropriation by the conqueror, which is available to us from al-Balādhurī. The distinction, from al-Balādhurī, being that the episodes in *Chachnama* are geared to demonstrate the religious hierarchy that it espouses. The building of mosques, the dialogues with the followers and practitioners of other faiths re-inforced this theme of religious orderliness.

As we skip forward to the histories produced in the late medieval, early modern period, the changed political landscape of Sindh necessitates reformulations of Muhammad b. Qasim's history in ways both subtle and radical. The memory of Muhammad b. Qasim, however, is defined just as strongly by its silence in the centuries after *Chachnama* as its re-emergence in Mughal regional histories. Prior to the seventeenth century, we have only one reference to Muhammad b. Qasim - in a letter by 'Ayn al-Mulk ibn Māhrū, a minister to Fīrūz Shah Tughluq. In this letter to the Sammā Jāms of Sindh, Māhrū exhorts the Jāms to keep paying the taxes, and not consort with the Mongols. He then narrates the episode of Muhammad b. Qasim's death as an example that "treachery, deceit and defamation" were the wont of Sindhis[9]

How do we account for the silence of Muhammad b. Qasim's history in medieval Indo-Persian accounts? One hint lies in the political history of the

9. *Inshā-e Māhrū*, 234.

region. Taken together, the Sumrā and the Sammā (1250 - 1520), provided almost three hundred years of local, regional control - acting as an internal frontier to the Delhi Sultans. In a certain sense, 'Ali Kufi's vision of a moral, decentralized state of co-existence found its true inheritance in these rulers. They did not seek political legitimation under the Islamicate banner or full alignment with the dominant powers. Unlike Qabacha, they succeeded in carving out a distinct sphere of influence, balancing the regional and local forces. Ucḥ, Multan and Thatta emerged as spiritual centers, though, these regimes made little overt connections to the Islamicate forms of governance or living. They maintained, instead, close ties - marital, tribal and political - with Hindu polities in the west and south of the sub-continent. The history of Muhammad b. Qasim emerged in the early thirteenth century at a particular moment of crisis in political and religious legitimacy. It reappeared with Akbar's invasion of Sindh in 1592.

4.1.1 Regional Histories: Muhammad b. Qasim in *Tar'īkh-i Ma'sūmi* and *Tuhfāt ul-Kirām*

A member of the local nobility, Mir Muhammad Ma'sūm (1537-1610) was born in Bhakkar and served honorably for Akbar during his invasion of Sindh. For this, he was handsomely rewarded and stationed further north, near Qandāhar. In 1600, Mir Ma'sūm wrote the next iteration of Sindh's past - using *Chachnama.* He dedicated his history of Sindh to his son so that "he would learn from the good and evil of the past, and benefit from the virtue

of knowledge."[10] However, Ma'sūm restricts to only fifteen pages the entire pre-history of the Delhi Sultunate and, hence, the extensive narrative of *Chachnama* is reduced back into a skeletal form.

As a born noble from Sindh, Mir Ma'sūm brought a very different set of concerns to the history of Muhammad b. Qasim. One key motives, in his writing was to present a history of the local elite, to show the "first-comer" status of various tribes and families in Sindh. Within that framework, *Chachnama* became a foundational source to identify and place the earliest Muslims in Sindh. The first example is the *chanōn* tribe who, Ma'sūmi writes was "the first *qaum* (nation) from the nations of Sindh who became Muslim."[11] In Ma'sūmi's retelling, they converted after observing Muhammad b. Qasim lead his army in prayer, and then in dining. This episode, given on the authority of *Chachnama*, is purely a construct of Ma'sūm but it demonstrates, once again, the malleability of pasts, in service of the present. *Chachnama*, and the history of Muhammad b. Qasim, is recast as the ur-text of Sindhi history by Ma'sūmi - a status that it will never relinquish. Ma'sūmi goes on to trace the early history of the Sammā as well, placing them in the role of the Jāts of *Chachnama* and referred to as the "lowest caste."

Muhammad b. Qasim, in *Tar'īkh-i Ma'sūmi*, is a devout commander of the faithful. His only determined act is to lead the troops in prayer after the conquest of every fort. He does not communicate with the non-Muslim populations - they hardly figure in this account, unless they are shown to embrace

10. *Tar'īkh-i Ma'sūmi* (Hyderabad: Sindhi Adabi Board, 1959), 4.

11. *ibid.*, 28.

Islam - and there is no communication with the center either. He is a strictly a military commander and not the moral leader of a new state. Still, even in his brevity, Ma'sūm introduces intriguing changes: Muhammad b. Qasim does demolish the temple and collect the riches sequestered within, but does not build any new mosques in their stead, which is a distinctively different usage of the sacred space.[12] In this, Muhammad b. Qasim is modeled more closely upon Mahmud Ghaznavi in the role of a temple destroyer. This, however, is really an after-thought. Even the formidable romance of Muhammad b. Qasim's end is narrated in brisk detail. The one change, Ma'sūmi introduces into the story is that the two daughters are not set alive in stone-walls, but are dragged from the tails of horses around the four corners of the city and then thrown into the Euphrates.

When Mir 'Ali Sher Qāni (1727-1788) wrote *Tūhfat ul-Kirām*, an epic social history of Sindh that incorporates *Chachnama* in significant ways, the concerns of Sindh were perhaps quite close to those of the thirteenth century. It was, once again, beset upon by a range of outside claimants while a weak ruler was trying to establish a new polity. The Talpūrs faced tough trials from the courts in Delhi, Kabul and London. Qāni, perhaps conscious of the grave political turmoil, wrote a history attuned to the spiritual and mystical leaders of Sindh - narrating folk epics and oral histories of various towns, centers, and grave-yards. In its debt to *Chachnama*, Qāni's *Tūhfat ul-Kirām* begins with a local history - reprising the stories of Chach and his generation of Sindhi rulers before connecting it to the spiritual and social history of the

12. Dāhir, too, gets a slight tweak. He advances into battle with two beautiful slave-girls on each side of his elephant, one feeding him wine and the other *pān*.

region.

Qāni authored over forty-two works, including numerous compendiums of his poetry (he excelled in the *mathnāvi* and *qasidā*); a dictionary of Persian poets in Sindh, *Muq'allāt-e Shur'ā* (1760); a history from the 'Abbasids to the Kalhōra, *Tar'īkh-i 'Abbasi* (1761); and a truly unique cultural history of Sindh, incorporating everything from fashion to culinary skills and means of relaxation, *Nisāb ul-Bulghā* (1783). *Tuhfāt ul-Kirām* (1761) comprises of three volumes. The first volume deals with the history of the prophets down to the early Caliphs. The second volume is divided into seven sections - each section containing histories of cities and towns in Sindh, along with the spiritual and ruling elite. The third volume is dedicated to the history of Sindh from Chach to the Kalhōra.

Tuhfāt ul-Kirām (Gifts of the Generous) concerns itself primarily with the cultural and spiritual aspects of Sindhi society. Qāni uses the history of Muhammad b. Qasim to illustrate the "pre-eminence" of certain practices and give their history. It is, of all the texts discussed thus far, the one that most closely resembles the *ajāib* literature of the tenth and the eleventh centuries (there are discussions of treacherous women, of soothsayers and evil fortunes). Qāni is also faithful to the narrative of *Chachnama*, providing detailed summaries of each major conquest, and its participants. Unlike Ma'sūmi, he brings the accommodation and co-habitation of *Chachnama* to the forefront.

In *Tuhfāt ul-Kirām*, Qāni's Muhammad b. Qasim marries Raja Dāhir's sister. He permits the inhabitants of Brahmanabad to build a new temple, gives orders to formalize their ascetic status and forgives them the *jizya* tax. Where

Ma'sūmi wrote about razing temples, Qāni does not. Muhammad b. Qasim builds mosques alongside the temples. Again, this indicates how varied the understandings of co-habitation and co-existence were throughout the various periods of Muslim rule in Sindh. In his emphasis on Muhammad b. Qasim's religiosity and piety, Qāni puts yet another layer of representation on this history. Unlike the *Chachnama*, Muhammad b. Qasim does not quote heavily from the Qur'an. Rather, his pious conduct is shown through his deference to the holy sites and in his long, extended meditative prayers. After the conquest of Daybul, he leads the Muslim army in three days of prayer and recital of Qur'an. An act of ascetic meditation quite common in Sufi practices.

Other silences emerge in this version of Muhammad b. Qasim. His military career is almost entirely subsumed. Qāni does not touch upon his relationship to Hajjaj, who is barely a presence in the text. Qāni is also not invested in providing advice on good governance, or on fair conduct - such administrative concerns are entirely missing. The romance of Muhammad b. Qasim's death does follow that of the *Chachnama* - though there is a twist to the fate of the daughters. They are crushed under the feet of elephant, not walled in while living or dragged by horses and drowned - another nod, perhaps, to Qāni's localization.

These two regional histories both expand and contract the Muhammad b. Qasim that emerged in the thirteenth century. Clearly, these are representations that reflect the political and cultural realities of the sixteenth and eighteenth century. However, before we move to the colonial period, it

is worthwhile to recapitulate where Muhammad b. Qasim stands in Indo-Persian historiography. Throughout these five centuries, he remains a minor figure. The coming of Islam to Sindh remains a regional story - just as Sindh remains a tumultuous frontier. The major classical texts of the Delhi Sultunate or the Mughal polity pay scant attention to the history of this region or to the history of Muhammad b. Qasim. His absence from the classical canon, and his presence in Sindhi regional histories, gives further credence to the argument for re-framing the history of Islam in India, as a regional question.

As we turn to the coming of the East India Company to Sindh and the emergence of a new contestation over the region, the history and conduct of Muhammad b. Qasim will become part of the canon of British Orientalist historiography. It is this particular representation of Muhammad b. Qasim that reshapes his popular and political memory in the postcolonial state of Pakistan.

4.2 The Temple Destroyer

"Cursed be he who puts reliance upon the promises of the *Feringees* (foreigners)," sighed the ruler of Sindh, Mir Nur Muhammad Talpur after being asked to acquiesce to yet another treaty by the East India Company (EIC) Political Agent, Capt. Edward Eastwick in 1839.[13] His frustration was understandable. The British, embroiled in what they perceived as the "Great Game"

13. Lutfullah Khan. *The Autobiography of Lutfullah, A Mahomedan Gentleman,* ed., Edward B. Eastwick (London: Smith, Elder Co., 1854) 249.

of imperialism on the frontiers of the empires of Kabul, Kalat, Punjab and Persia, saw Sindh as little more than a commercial and military passageway. Though the EIC had been involved in securing passage and ports in the Arabian Gulf since the early 18th century - often in direct military contention with the Portuguese and Dutch navies - they had not had much success in dealing with the Talpurs in Sindh. In 1758, they had signed a treaty with then emirate of Kalhōras for the establishment of a factory in Thatta and the rights to exclude all other commercial interests.[14] However, the end of the Kalhōra dynasty and the emergence of the Baluchi Talpurs in 1782 led the EIC to close its interests in Sindh. This disengagement did not last too long as commercial and political factors put Sindh back on the EIC map.

In 1800, Nathan Crow was sent from Bombay to the court of the Talpur Mirs to sign a treaty that would "exclude all Europeans and Americans from Sindh as well as control the tribes along the Cutch border." In his correspondence, he notes that Sindh would serve as an excellent bulwark not only against France and Russia but also against Afghanistan, the Marathas and Ranjit Singh in Lahore. The Talpurs, wary of foreign troops on their land, signed the treaty to keep the Company at bay for the time being. In 1809, another treaty was negotiated to "prevent any establishment of the tribe of French in Sindh" and, in 1820, to further restrict the settlement of any "Europeans or Americans" in the region.[15] It was the desire to chart the waters of Indus that brought Alexander Burnes (1805-1841) to the port of Karachi

14. C. U. Aitchison. *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Sanads relating to India and Neighboring Countries* vol. 7 (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1892), 295.

15. *Ibid,* 308-9.

in 1830. His ostensible mission was to deliver presents from the King of England to Raja Ranjit Singh. After some hesitation, the Talpurs gave him permission to navigate the river to Lahore.

Burnes notes that as he ascended the river a "Syud" turned to his companion and said, "Sinde is now gone, since the English have seen the river, which is the road to its conquest." Hearing that, Burnes comments, "If such an event do happen, I am certain that the body of people will hail the happy day; but it will be an evil one for the Syuds, the descendants of Mahomed, who are the only people, besides the rulers that derive precedence and profit from the existing order of things."[16] Burnes' voyage ended up opening the channels of the Indus to the EIC. They capitalized on this opening and forced more commercial treaties, in 1832, and another in 1834, allowing British passage across Sindh, taxation on commerce along the Indus and the usage of Karachi harbors. Sindh, the frontier, became a necessary short-cut to the wars in Afghanistan and Punjab. In addition to such concerns, the EIC was apprehensive that the Indus was being used to supply Malwa opium to the Portuguese harbors of Daman and Diu in Gujarat, by way of the Karachi harbor. These routes had to be stopped or, at the very least, taxed.

Still the Mirs resisted attempts by the British to establish a residency in Hyderabad. For a brief while, they were able to play the British, Ranjit Singh and the Kabul crown against each other. The impasse broke in 1838, as Ranjit Singh moved his forces towards Shikarpur with demands for tributes from the

16. Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara: Being the Account of a Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary and Persia. Also, Narrative of a Voyage on the Indus, from the Sea to Lahore* (Philadelphia: E. L. Carey & A. Hart, 1835), 36.

Mirs. Mir Nur Muhammad Talpur signed a new defense treaty with the British creating the post of a Political Agent and a residence in Hyderabad. Their long resistance had cast the Mirs as particularly stubborn Oriental despots in the Company's eyes. To the Governor-General, the Mir's recalcitrance, descriptions of their hedonistic, and rumors of their growing involvement with Iran were grave sins. While the Mirs vehemently denied this - and some Company officials such as James Outram and Henry Pottinger tried to debunk these claims - the office of the Governor-General was not convinced that these former tributaries of the Emir of Kabul were innocent.

In 1839, more treaties followed, increasing the number of British troops in Sindh; abrogating all foreign affairs of the Mirs in favor of the British; putting an annual subsidy on the Mirs and giving the British authority to mint coins (with the Queen's visage) in Sindh. In the meantime, Admiral Maitland captured Karachi on the pretense that someone had fired a cannon shot at his frigate while it was in the harbor. The capture of Karachi, a major port of commerce, was a severe blow to the Mirs. They did not have many options left. The British campaign in Afghanistan (the first Anglo-Afghan war) necessitated troop movements across the Mirs territory and any mis-step could have easily made the Mirs a target. Although their previous alliances with the Emir in Kabul had long fractured, the Company grew suspicious that the Mirs were now in secret communications with Dost Muhammad.

The Anglo-Afghan war was a stinging defeat for the new Governor-General of the EIC, Lord Edward Law Ellenborough (1790–1871). He appointed a new commander of troops in Sindh, Sir Charles Napier (1782-1853) in 1842.

Neither of these men seemed comfortable with the status quo in Sindh. Ellenborough was eager to take-over the commercial concerns of the Indus delta and was unhappy with the lack of control exerted by the Mirs over the activities of pirates and rogue traders (that is, Portuguese traders) on the channels. Napier, a veteran military commander of imperial wars in Europe and self-described victim of fool-hardy politicians, had arrived in India convinced that the Company had lost its moorings in India - becoming beholden to commerce and shying away from their Godly mission. A deeply religious man, Napier saw the liberation of Sindh from its despotic, Muslim rulers his Christian duty, with the added benefit that it would demonstrate his brilliance as a tactical commander:

> I made up my mind that although war had not been declared (nor is it necessary to declare it), I would at once march upon Imangurh and prove to the whole Talpur family of both Khyrpor and Hyderabad that neither their deserts, nor their negotiations can protect them from the British troops. The Ameers will fly over the Indus, and we shall become masters of the left bank of the river from Mitenkote to the mouth; peace with civilization will then replace war and barbarism. My conscience will be light, for I see no wrong in so regulating a set of tyrants who are themselves invaders, and have in sixty years nearly destroyed the country. The people hate them.[17]

Despite his personal determination, Napier faced intense resistance from the Political Agents who had long maintained relationships with the Talpur Mirs. Edward Eastwick, James Outram and Henry Pottinger belonged to an almost bygone generation of Company officials - experts in Persian and Arabic, as well as prone to "going native" and socializing with their *munshis*. Outram

17. William F. P. Napier, *The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles James Napier* vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1857), 275.

especially, became a stern resistant to Napier's efforts of taking control away from the Mirs. In his efforts to have the Company honor its agreements with the Mirs, he conducted numerous interviews with them, professing their loyalty, and sent the translated transcripts to Napier. But Napier, who did not know a speck of Persian or Sindhi or Hindustani, continuously cast aspersions on the truthfulness of the translations, and found ways of dismissing them from official records.[18] Since he had already concluded that the Mirs were the "greatest ruffians," "imbeciles," possessing "zenanas filled with young girls torn from their friends, and treated when in the hareem with revolting barbarity," and even prone to enjoying the occasional human "sacrifice," such missives from the Mirs were highly un-necessary. [19] In brief, Napier needed an excuse to declare the Talpurs as enemies and it came via an intercepted letter, assumed to have been written by one of the Mirs to the Afghan chiefs promising aid against the British. It was too good to be true - and it was - but it provided Napier with the *casus belli* for abrogation of all treaties with the Mirs.

On 17 February 1843, Napier defeated the assembled troops of the Mirs at Miani and annexed Sindh to the Company. Initially, the conquest was hailed as a heroic return of an EIC long floundering in bureaucratic miasma. Some

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18. In his disavowal of native language, Napier hailed back to a previous conqueror - Lord Clive. Lewis Smith wrote in the introduction to his translation of *Qīssa Chahār Dervīsh,* "Clive never knew the languages of India. When asked why he never learnt it, he replied 'Why, if I had, I should not have conquered India; the black knaves would have led me astray by their cunning advice; but as I never understood them, I was never misled by them." See Lewis Ferdinand Smith, *The Tale of the Four Durwesh: Translated from the Urdu Tongue of Meer Ummun Dhailee* (Lucknow: Newul Kishore Press, 1895), 111.

19. See William F. P. Napier. *The Conquest of Scinde* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1845)

even claimed that "since Clive's glorious victory at Plassey there has been nothing achieved by native or European troops in India at all to compare to it."[20] But soon, the annexation sparked intense debate in India and in England as reports surfaced that Napier had ignored warnings that the intercepted letter was a forgery. The contributions to the Company's coffers brought by the annexation of Sindh did not match what Ellenborough's earlier claims.[21] The Political Agents stationed in Sindh - Outram, Eastwick and Pottinger - publicly derided the unilateral actions of Napier, arguing that his actions were against the best interests of the EIC. Inquiries were set in motion against Ellenborough and Napier. The Parliament called upon the General Court of Directors of the EIC to resolve against the "uncalled-for, impolitic and unjust" invasion of Sindh. Ellenborough was recalled and while Napier remained as ruler of Sindh for a short while, he had to fight for his reputation in India and at home.[22] Sindh - governed through the Bombay Presidency - remained an administrative challenge for the British after the annexation.

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20. Thomas Postans. *Personal Observations on Sindh; the Manners and Customs of Its Inhabitants; and Its Productive Capabilties: With A Sketch of its History, A Narrative of Recent Events, And an Account of the Connection of the British Government with that Country to the Present Period* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1843), 334.

21. For the role of the Opium trade in Sindh's annexation see J. Y. Wong, "British Annexation of Sind in 1843: An Economic Perspective," *Modern Asian Studies,* vol. 31, no. 2, (May, 1997): 225-244.

22. *Peccavi!* (I *have* Scinde/I have *sinned*) - the apocryphal pun assigned to Napier (in reality, a *Punch* cartoon) - sums up the popular reaction to Sindh's annexation.

4.2.1 Colonial Narratives, Orientalist Histories

The annexation of Sindh, in itself, is a remarkable account of the varied teleologies of colonialism in India. As one of the last military acquisitions of the Company, it preserves a documentary history of the power/knowledge complex at the heart of the colonialist project. Sindh had stayed dormant for a long while in the Company's imagination - too remote a frontier, with too many political and military powers projecting their spheres of influence - with competition in its commercial interests from Sindhi as well as Portuguese and Dutch merchants. However, the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the posting of a French emissary in Persia in 1806, as well as the fear of Russian aggression, forced the Company to turn its attention to Sindh.[23]. As the Company officials awoke to the political importance of the frontier of Sindh, they began an effort to compile historical, anthropological and geological data on the 'people of Scinde'.

Lord Ellenborough, who became the governor general of India in 1842, felt gravely the need to make clear the Muslim tyranny over the subjugated Hindus of Sindh and Gujarat. When he dramatically brought back the "gates of Somnath" from Kabul, he declared to "all Princes and Chiefs and People of India" that "the insult of 800 years is at last avenged. The gates of the temple of Somnath, so long the memorial of your humiliation, are become the proudest record of your national glory."[24] Ellenborough, and Napier,

23. See Adrian Duarte, *The History of British Relations with Sind, 1613-1843* (Karachi: National Book Foundation, 1976)

24. Edward Law Ellenborough, "Proclamation from the Governor-General to all the Princes and Chiefs and People of India," *The Annual Register, or a View of the History and*

explicitly cast the Mirs as oppressors and sought a history of Sindh which demonstrated the past tyrannies of the Muslim regimes. It should be noted that this construction - of hundreds of years of enmity between the Muslims and Hindus of Sindh - was easily refuted from within the Company's archive, itself.

One of the earliest accounts of Sindh was written by Alexander Hamilton (d. circa 1733) who sailed Indus in 1699, and found a land overrun with "villains" who "struck a Terror on all that had Commerce at Tatta."[25] In his account, Hamilton notes that though the official religion in Sindh is Islam, there are "ten *Gentows* or *Pagans* for one *Mussulman*" and that the Muslims "have full Toleration for their Religion, and keep their Fasts and Feasts as in former Times, when the Sovereignty was in Pagan Princes Hands. They burn their Dead, but the Wives are restrained from burning with the Corps of their Husbands."[26]

Hamilton, however, was a lone voice in the corpus. As the strategic aims of the Company shifted, it called upon a young cadre of officials to write the histories of Sindh - paying attention to the atrocities of Muslims, the

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Politics of the Year 1842 ed. Edmund Burke, (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, 1843), 252.

25. Alexander Hamilton. *A New Account of the East Indies. Giving An exact and copious Description of the Situation, Product, Manufactures, Laws, Customs, Religion, Trade & c. of all the Countries and Islands, which lie between the Cape of Good Hope, and the Island of Japon. Interspersed with An entertaining Relation not only of the principal Events, which happened during the Author's Thirty Years Residence in those Parts; but also of the most remarkable Occurrences and Revolutions in those vast Dominions, for this Century past. Comprehending also, Many curious and interesting Particulars relating to our Commerce with those Countries, and the Affairs of the East India Company,* vol. 1 (London: C. Hitch, 1744), 115.

26. *ibid.,* 128

inherent despotism of the Mirs and the moral obligations of the British to bring freedom to Sindh.

Captain James McMurdo (1789-1822) of the Bombay Establishment Army, was the first to provide a summary of *Tohfat-al-Girani* (sic), in his *An Account of the Country of Sindh.* The Sindhis, he believed, had "treachery as a national vice" and the Mirs had no zeal greater than "propogating the faith." The sketch of regional history that he provided for his audience, painted a harsh portrait, marking each period of Muslim rule - starting with Muhammad b. Qasim - as yet another dark age for the Hindu subjects. The Mirs, he helpfully noted, hoard a great treasure "all in gold and jewels" in a fort "inaccessible except from the top of the hill."[27] McMurdo was most likely unaware of the echo, in his description of Mir's treasure, to the "house of gold" which existed in the accounts of the Arabic geographers.

The first English history of Sindh that incorporated selections from the *Chachnama* was published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1838 by Capt. Thomas Postans (1808-1846) - an officer in the Bombay infantry. He later expanded his translations of *Chachnama* in his *Personal Observations on Scinde,* published in 1843. He referred to the *Chachnama* as the "principal Persian manuscript authority consulted in the history of Sindh." But his focus was on selections held a romantic tinge of ancient Sindh or the ensuing Muslim barbarity:

> Sindh ... under its Hindu possessors was a rich, flourishing, and

27. James McMurdo. "An Account of the Country of Sindh; with Remarks on the State of Society, the Government, Manners, and Customs of the People" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* v. 1, (1834): 233-58.

> extensive monarchy, but that, subsequently becoming the prey of conquerors, who, paid no attention to the improvement of the country or maintenance of the imperial authority, this valuable territory dwindled at length into waste... All the peculiarities and unsullied pride of caste, which distinguishes the Hindu under his own or British government, has been completely lost in Sindh. In India we have seen the dormant spirit of an injured people rousing itself to retributive vengeance, flinging off the yoke of Islam, regaining their monarchies, and making the bigoted Moslem tremble at the Pagan's power; but in Sindh oppression has rooted out all patriotism, and the broken spirited Hindu becomes a helpless servant to his Moslem tyrant, and willing inducer of his own extreme degradation.[28]

The portrait of Muhammad b. Qasim that emerged in Postans focuses specifically on his habit of "converting the Pagan temples into mosques and places of Mohammedan prayer." His destruction of the temple at Daybul "occasioned a general despondency throughout the country."[29] After the killing of Dahir, "as usual, mosques were erected on the ruins of the temples, or those places were transformed for purposes of Mohammedan worship."[30] Postans closes by recounting the "romantic though cruel end of the conqueror Bin Cassim." Keeping in mind that Postans' *Observations* was an explicit defense of Charles Napier's invasion of, and subsequent policies, in Sindh, it is no great insight to read this mode of translation and transmutation as an extended apologia for the invasion of Sindh and an incitement for the Sindhis to reconcile with the history of being a unique nation oppressed by the Muslim rulers. As we

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28. Thomas Postans.*Personal Observations on Scinde: Manners and Customs of Its Inhabitants; and Its Productive Capabilities; With A Sketch of Its History, A Narrative of Recent Events, And an Account of the Connection of the British Government with that Country to the Present Day* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1843), 158-60.

29. *ibid.,* 149.

30. *ibid.,* 151.

shall soon see in greater detail, this imagining of a Sindhi *qaum* that pre-existed Islam and was subjugated by the Muslims, will get appropriated in the Sindhi sub-nationalism of the late twentieth century.

Postans was not the only subordinate of Charles Napier traveling across Sindh. The hills of Thatta were also the training grounds for perhaps the greatest Orientalist translator and explorer, Richard F. Burton (1821-1890). In 1842, a very young Burton was assigned to Sindh as a Regimental Interpreter. He produced three volumes on his time in Sindh, *Scinde, or the Unhappy Valley* (1851), *Scinde, and the Races that Inhabit the Valley of the Indus* (1851) and *Falconry in the Valley of Indus* (1853). In his construction, again, Sindh was a paradise before the Muslims:

> It is related by the chronicles of antiquity, that in days gone by, and ages that have long fled, Scinde was a most lovely land situated in a delightful climate, with large, flourishing, and populous cities; orchards producing every kind of tree and fruit. It was governed by a powerful monarch who had mighty horses and impregnable forts, whose counsellors were renowned for craft, and whose commanders celebrated for conduct. And the boundaries of his dominions and provinces extended as far as Kanoj and Cashmere, upon whose south-western frontier one of the Rahis planted two towering cypresses. During the caliphate of the Chief of True Believers, Umar son of Khattab, it was resolved, with the permission of Allah, to subject the sinners of Scinde to the scimitar of certain sturdy saints militant.[31]

The project of James Mill, started in *The History of British India* (1817), could have found no better a "historical proof" than Burton's depiction of this ill-fortuned land. The paradise of Ancient Sindh, destroyed by the fanaticism

31. Richard F. Burton. *Scinde; or, The Unhappy Valley* vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), 125.

of the marauding Muslims, resulted in the arrival of the long Dark Age. The tragedy was greater , for Burton, since Sindh had waited even longer (than Bengal, for instance) for its emancipation. However, Burton being a master wordsmith, would never be so crass as to leave the readers with his words, alone. He recasts the fall of Daybul into a seamless narrative, deftly combining earlier and later episodes from the *Chachnama*, to highlight the fanaticism of Muslims and Muhammad b. Qasim, in order to let the readers see the tragedy that befell this unhappy valley:

> Now, in the centre of the Fort of Dewal was a place of idols, forty rods high, and on it a dome also forty rods ; on the summit was a silken flag, with four tongues, the work of a potent necromantist. None of the Islamites knew this, till, on the evening of the day of victory, an old Brahman, issuing privily from the fortress, came and stood at the gate of the pavilion, in the presence of Mohammed bin Kasim. "I learn from my books," quoth the idolator, "that this country will he conquered by the scimitar of the stranger religionist; that the appointed time is at length come, and that thou art the instrument in the hand of Fate. I am here to show thee the way. Those before our times constructed this temple as a talisman. Until the spell is broken thy difficulty and danger endure. Order some stratagem, so that the banner on yonder dome, together with that part of the edifice, be thrown down." Mohammed bin Kasim took thought that night.
>
> In the morning he consulted the engineer of the catapults who said, "If thou givest me ten thousand pieces of silver as a reward, I will undertake, by some means or other, to bring down the flag and the cupola after three shots; if I fail, I will agree to have my hand cut off." At the blast of the trumpet the host assembled in battle array, each cohort taking its place round the green banner that belonged to it. Every man stood silent as the dead whilst the machine, laden with a ponderous stone, was brought to bear upon its distant mark; and a universal shout of *Din! Din!* (Faith! Faith! the old Arab war-cry, according to the Scindians) broke from their breathless lips as the shivered flag-staff flew far away, bearing with it the talismanic banner.

Again the instrument was charged; this time its heavy load dashed against the dome, which rocked and swayed as from the effect of an earthquake. The bearded warriors then drew their scimitars, and, led by the chieftains, moved onwards in order and rank, silent with expectations.

A cry resounded from within the fort. The besieging host turned their eyes in the direction of the sound. When the veil of dust which concealed the temple floated away upon the pinions of the breeze, not a stone remained visible to mark the place where the lofty cupola once stood. Again arose the loud cry, *Din! Din!* and the turbaned ranks, bearing the battering-rams dashed furiously at the fortified entrances. The warders and defenders of the walls, struck with preternatural terror, fled their posts. In a few minutes the split planks and gates torn from their hinges, afforded an easy passage to the assailants.

Thus was Dewal lost and won. For three days there was a general massacre of the inhabitants. The victors then brought out the Moslem prisoners, and captured immense property and treasures. Before throwing down the pagoda, and substituting the mosque and the minaret in its stead, Mahommed bin Kasim, ordering the attendance of the Brahmans, entered the temple and bade them show him the deity they adored. A well-formed figure of a man on horseback being pointed out to him, he drew his sabre to strike it, when one of the priests cried, "it is an idol and not a living being!" Then advancing towards the statue, the Moslem removed his mailed gauntlet, and placing it upon the hand of the image, said to the by-standers, "See, this idol hath but one glove, ask him what he hath done with the other?" They replied, "What should a stone know of these things?"

Whereupon Mahommed bin Kasim, rebuking them, rejoined, "verily, yours is a curious object of worship, who knows nothing, even about himself." He then directed that the Brahmans, to distinguish them from other Hindoos, should carry in their hands a small vessel of grain, as mendicants, and should beg from door to door every morning; after which he established a governor at Dewal, and, having satisfactorily arranged affairs in that quarter, embarked his machines of war in boats, sent them up the river to Nirunkot, and

proceeded with his army by land in the same direction.[32]

Muhammad b. Qasim, in Burton's narrative does not inhabit a history separate from the long histories of Muslim invaders. He is, if anything, a distillation of the very essence of Muslim oppression. Burton links Muhammad b. Qasim to the long line Arab Muslim conquerors, in order to bring into sharp focus their "outsider" status and the rupture with Sindh's native past that they caused. In this mode of translation, the most significant theme of the history of Muhammad b. Qasim is the disruption of the distinct, proud and independent nation of Sindhis. It should be noted that on Burton's racial scale the Sindhis were not as advanced as the Persians but, were above the lowliest Hindus - facts which allowed them to fall to the Muslims but survive their centuries of subjugation. This emphasis on the racial uniqueness, or difference, of the Sindhis was also a key factor in linking the Baluchi Talpur Mirs as usurping invaders like Muhammad b. Qasim.

There can be no doubt that there is an explicit, and immediate, link between the narratives of Sindh's past in Postans and Burton, and Charles Napier's casting of himself as the liberator of Sindhi people. Napier repeatedly used the argument of Muslim brutality, in the pasts of Sindh, to paint the current Mirs as usurpers, with "their stupid policy to injure agriculture, to check commerce, to oppress the working man, and to accumulate riches for their own sensual pleasures." The narrative of oppression, of a Hindu majority population seething under a Muslim minority was so entrenched within the Company's productions of Sindh's past that it flattened out *all* the histories of

32. *ibid.,* 131-4

this region, calcifying all the portrayals of Muhammad b. Qasim from Arabic and Persian accounts within one act: temple destruction.

4.2.2 *The History of India*

James Mill (1773-1836) finished his *The History of British India* in 1817, which quickly became an hegemonic text on Indian pasts - projecting his radical Utilitarianism onto a static, unchanging Ancient India.[33] While it remained a required reading on the curriculum at East India College at Haileybury, it was supplanted by works produced by former and current Company officials who filled Mill's constructs - the Ancient Hindu period, a Medieval Muslim one and finally, the immediate history of British Rule - with regional and local data.

Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859), who began his career with the Marathas in Poona, deliberately set out to offer a corrective to Mill's *History* - one which was "under the guidance of impressions received in India."[34] His *History of India: The Hindu and Mahometan Periods*, completed in 1841, became a key text - along with Elliot - for nationalist historians of the twentieth century. He may have had historiographical issues with Mills but his re-casting of Sindhi history differed little from the accounts of Postans and Burton.

Elphinstone situates the Muslim urge to conquer in the "fanaticism of the

33. See Ronald B. Inden. *Imagining India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001)

34. Mountsuart Elphinstone. *The History of India: The Hindu and Mahometan Periods* (London: John Murray, 1841), ix.

false prophet," the history of Muhammad b. Qasim becomes the originary source for communal strife and warfare among Hindus and Muslims. For Elphinstone, Mohammad b. Qasim was "prudent and conciliating" but caught between the Muslim habits of "ferocity and moderation." When taking Daybul, for example, Elphinstone narrates his cruelty: "Casim at first contented himself with circumcising all the Bramins; but, incensed at their rejection of this sort of conversion, he ordered all above the age of seventeen to be put to death, and all under it, with the women, to be reduced to slavery."[35] Muhammad b. Qasim captured the forts, put the men to sword, the women in bondage and razed the temples. In contrast to this barbarity, Elphinstone highlights the bravery of the local resistance, starting with Dahir, who "already wounded with an arrow, mounted his horse and renewed the battle with unabated courage, he was unable to restore the fortune of the day and fell fighting gallantly in the midst of the Arabian cavalry."[36] In the fall of Brahmanabad, Elphinstone narrates the "masculine spirit of his widow" who marshaled the defenses of the city and, when left with no hope of survival, perished in "flames of their own kindling."[37]

Elphinstone's reading of Islam's emergence is informative because it becomes the hegemonic reading in Orientalist historiography of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century - presaging the works of Vincent Smith, for example. The history of Muhammad b. Qasim and the conquest of Sindh, exemplified to Elphinstone, a particularly trenchant example of the injus-

35. *ibid.*, 300.

36. *ibid.*, 301.

37. *ibid.*, 309.

tices of Muslim pasts in India. While within the greater narrative of Muslim despots and temple destroyers, Muhammad b. Qasim did not merit the same attention as the raiders of Somnath, he did represent the *earliest* fissure in the history of India. As such, important questions about the nature of conquest and resistance could be raised against the backdrop of this history. Why did, Elphinstone wonders, the Arab fail to take over India as they had done Iran, Syria and Iraq? His analysis hinged on the resistance to conversion offered by the 'complex' priestly classes of India - a lack of which doomed the rather simplistic theologies of Zorastrian Iran. As the narratives Elphinstone wove into later historiography, the nationalist response picked these threads up and re-constituted a new contestation over Muhammad b. Qasim.

It is worth glancing briefly at another key intervention in Sindhi pasts - the translations of *Chachnama* undertaken by Henry Miers Elliot (1808-1853). He began his compendium, *The History of India as told by Its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period,* in 1843. The work was to have translated 231 Arabic and Persian histories of India but his death in 1853 left that task unfinished. Published posthumously by John Dowson in 1867-77 in eight volumes, the first book on the Arab conquest of Sindh became one of the most influential collections in colonial historiography - introducing the *Chachnama* to the Anglo-Indian audience of late nineteenth century. Elliot had fervent hope that the translation would result in a time "when the full light of European truth and discernment begins to shed its beams upon the obscurity of the past, and to relieve us from the necessity of appealing to the Native Chroniclers of the time, who are, for the most part dull, prejudiced, ignorant and

superficial."[38] However, Elliot's agenda was not only to bring to "light" the histories of Muslims and provide a much needed distance from the native informant but it was also to give voice to a hitherto silenced populations - the native Hindus of India - who can finally provide "the thoughts, emotions, and raptures which a long oppressed race might be supposed to give vent to, when freed from the tyranny of its former masters.[39]

Chachnama and the history of Muhammad b. Qasim were a central configuration in Elliot's presentation of Muslim pasts. "An air of truth pervades the whole," he remarks on the *Chachnama*, in his preface. Elliot wrote only a brief introduction to the *Chachnama* in his published translation in which the only comment he made was on the episode of Muhammad's death. He called it "novel, and not beyond the bounds of probability, when we consider the blind obedience which at that time was paid to the mandates of the Prophet's successor, of which, at a later period, we have so many instances in the history of the Assassins, all inspired by the same feeling, and executed in the same hope."[40]

However, found and published posthumously, was Elliot's own narrative take on *The Advances of Arabs Towards Sind* in which he synthesizes the Persian and Arabic histories to illustrate the ignominy of the Muslim invaders: "Scarcely had Muhammad expired, when his followers and disciples, issuing from their naked deserts ... terror and devastation, murder and rapine, accom-

38. H. M. Elliot. *The History of India, as told by ItsOwn Historians: The Muhammadan Period* Vol. 1 (London: Trübner and Co., 1867), p. xvi

39. *ibid.* xxii.

40. *ibid.*, 136.

panied their progress, in fulfillment of the prophetic denunciation of Daniel, that this descendant of Ishmael 'shall destroy wonderfully...' ."[41] Muhammad b. Qasim, in Elliot's estimation, was one of the "better" invaders who partook in "much less, wanton sacrifice of life than was freely indulged in by most of the ruthless bigots who have propagated the same faith elsewhere."[42] This "unwonted toleration" on Muhammad b. Qasim's part, may have "arisen from the small number of the invading force, as well as from ignorance of civil institutions."[43]

Elliot's more circumspect take on Muhammad b. Qasim never acquired the circulation and the prominence that his commissioned translations achieved. But before we trace the effects of Elliot's translations into the nationalist period, we have to make a slight excursion into mid-nineteenth century London. The story of the end of Muhammad b. Qasim that caught the imagination of the early Orientalists as well as Elliot and Elphinstone had one curious, short-lived career in the metropole as well.

4.2.3 A Romance of History

In 1843, Marianne Postans, the wife of Thomas Postans, published a story in the *Metropolitan Magazine* entitled, "The Daughters of King Dahir: A Romance of History." The *Metropolitan,* a liberal magazine edited by the novelist (of historical and military genre fiction) Frederick Marryat, serialized a number

41. *ibid.,* 414.
42. *ibid.,* 433.
43. *ibid.,* 438.

of such "fictions" from the expatriate community of Company employees. Marianne Postans' re-imagining, perhaps evoking the historical fiction of her time, tells the entire history of the conquest of Sindh through the prism of Muhammad b. Qasim's death:

> "Commander of the faithful," exclaimed Bin Cassim, his noble and handsome countenance beaming with enthusiasm, "give but to me the triumph of punishing these infidels and robbers - confide into my hand, great prince, but a tithe of the army of Cantibah - let my band be but as a white spot in the skin of a black camel compared to his, and, by the beard of the prophet, I swear not only to restore to thee the red gold and fair virgins of Serundeep, but, as God is merciful, the head of the slave Dahir shall roll at thy feet, O Khalif! and the banner of Islam shall float over the blood-stained waters of the Indus, until the dogs of infidels shall shriek aloud for mercy, and none shall heed the cry, nor stay the reeking sword of Moslem vengeance, until in one voice the shout is raised, 'God is but one God and Mohamed is his prophet'.[44]

Though Cassim is called "one of the fairest of Islam's children," he remains dedicated to the task of subjugating the proud Dahir and his family. The revenge, when it comes, acts as a shocking lesson to the Caliph whose own niece Ayesha was betrothed to Cassim. A similarly favorable treatment awaited Muhammad b. Qasim in Thomas Hood's version.

In 1861, Hood, an essayist and playwright, published a verse rendering of the story of Muhammad b. Qasim:

> Oomerkote!
>
> Oh Queen of Scinde, to-morrow's fun beholds
>
> They happy plains the scene of such a strife

44. Marianne Postans, "The Daughters of King Dahir: A Romance of History" *The Metropolitan Magazine* vol. XXXVIII (London: May to August, 1843): 225

As leaves thee ever free - or ever fallen
Down - down - and trampled'neath the Moslem's heel.[45]

Akin to Postans' version (it is a possibility that he took the narrative from her), Hood's Kasim appears a noble soul, trapped dually - first, by his ill-chosen faith, which knows no mercy and second, by his own tragic fate. He refuses the entreaties of his soldiers to turn away the Caliph's command:

"By you," he cried, "our Khalif. We have fought
For you - not Waled" - and choses to give his life "save as an offering
needful for the good
Of him whom Allah chose to rule the state."[46]

Nothing more is recorded about Muhammad b. Qasim in the literary world of London. Marianne Postans went on to have a successul career as a writer on Anglo-India. However, these moments of historical imaginary reverberate at the turn of the century, as Muhammad b. Qasim's story departs the realm of historians and enters those of story-tellers.

4.3 The Sindhi Villain

The unnamed narrator in the Sindhi short story, 'Nawan Peghamber' (New Prophets) feels the oppressive weight of history on his young shoulders. In his school textbooks, he does not notice that there are no Sindhi heroes, only

45. Thomas Hood. *The Daughters of King Daher: A Story of the Mohammedan Invasion of Scinde.* (London: Saunders, Otley, And Co., 1861), 3.

46. *ibid.,* 41.

Sindhi villains. He blithely accepts this history and tells it to his friends and his mother:

> It is written: "Do you know how the port of Debal was destroyed?"
> The answer is that the ruler of Sindh, Raja Dahir, was a very cruel, despotic, pleasure-loving, and adulterous king. He had in his possession hundreds of slave girls, white as marble and still he had married his own sister, and with bands of pirates, he robbed and looted the ships carrying pilgrims to Arab lands. The Almighty directed his anger towards him and His Benediction for All Muslims, the Caliph Hajjaj, took it in his heart to attack him and send he sent an army under the leadership of *mujahid* Mohammad Bin Qasim and all of Sindh cried out for relief. The horses of the Arab *ghazis* uprooted the infidels with their children and the accursed Dahir was badly defeated. His head was hung on a spear and the *mujahids* of Mohammad Bin Qasim heaped rocks into their giant catapults to demolish the walls of Debal out of existence.
> I was very happy to read this.[47]

He accumulates these many histories, of Alexander, of Muhammad b. Qasim, of Aibak, glad to know that his land had seen so many brave warriors. He reproduces these histories, learned in school, to his "illiterate friends". It is only, later, when his mother narrates to him the story of Doda the Soomro that he grasps the silences embedded in the school textbooks and the distortions. He realizes that the villains are always Sindhis - their characters impugned by these national histories. The true history, an oral history that comes down from his grandmother to him, tells a different story. A story conspicuously absent from the national textbooks. His only relief is to write his own history, to correct this crime against history.

47. Ali Baba, *Fires in an Autumn Garden: Short stories from Urdu and the Regional languages of Pakistan*, ed. Asif Farrukhi (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3. My thanks to Elena Bashir for the reference.

Ali Baba (b. 1939), the acclaimed Sindhi author who wrote "Nawan Peghamber" in the early 1980s, took seriously the charge of rescuing the history of Sindh from the state of Pakistan. He was not alone in this task, other luminaries such as the Sindhi poet Sheikh Iyaz and the politician G. M. Syed, were all engaged in an effort to represent Sindhi pasts - ancient and modern - and counter, what they perceived to be, the crimes of the national histories.

4.3.1 The Crisis in Sindh

On 30 September 1955, General Yahya Khan declared the three provinces of West Pakistan (Punjab, Northwest Frontier, and Sindh) and the princely states (Kalat, Bahawalpur etc.) to be an administratively single unit. The "One Unit" policy was meant to dissuade East Pakistan from claiming political equality with West Pakistan based on population. It proved to be disastrous - the provinces saw it, for what it was, an attempt to strip state rights and give them to the federal government. It also marked a renewal in Sindhi nationalism post Partition. For G. M. Syed, it was an act of betrayal, an attempt to erase Sindh's unique past from the national consciousness. Along with other intellectuals and elites, he launched a vigorous campaign against the One Unit policy. Leading writers, poets, and intellectuals protested against the erasure of Sindh's autonomy and saw the policy as a colonial effort of the Punjabi majority, who wanted to appropriate the natural resources of Sindh. It also revealed the fissure within Sindh - the recently migrated Mohajir population in Karachi, saw little common cause with G. M. Syed.

The dissolution of One Unit, in 1970 by General Yahya Khan, and the bitter secession of Bangladesh, in 1971, left the ideologically formulated Islamic Republic of Pakistan teetering on the brink of dissolution itself. Baluchistan, Sindh and Northwest Frontier Province, all had had difficult transitions to the post-colonial period. The influx of Urdu-speaking communities from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Hyderabad (Deccan) and Bihar to Karachi and Hyderabad (Sindh) had destabilized the Sindhi community and created rifts - that continue to this day. In Sindh, G. M. Syed launched a movement for granting equal status to Sindhi in public schools, as well as for equal representation of Sindhis in administration. In 1970, the University of Sindh declared Sindhi as its administrative language (in defiance of the national decree for Urdu) and in July 1972, the Sindh Legislative Assembly passed a bill requiring the teaching of Sindhi from grade four onwards and its usage in governmental departments. The declaration resulted in language riots in Karachi, between Mohajirs (Urdu speaking) and ethnic Sindhis. A nation tied together by strings of faith and language, Islam and Urdu was challenged on all accounts by regional calls to sovereignty and national calls for Islamization.

The *Awami Tehreek Sindh* (People's Movement of Sindh), founded in 1970, and G. M. Syed's *Jiye Sindh Mahaz* (Long Live Sindh Frontier) gained strength in the 1970s. The students in the Sindhi Department at Karachi University held weekly gatherings called *Dahir ki Sham* (An Evening with Dahir). Sheikh Iyaz's famous verses were already on all lips:

> I belong to the religion
> Of all men, all women and all children,

I am everyone.
I am as old as the hills of Aror
I am the madan-mast plant
Which grew
Wherever there fell
The drops of blood
Shed by Ladi
Fighting the ruthless Arabs.
I am the cave
Of Goddess Kali's thousand idols
Which I wrought in stone,
Which I have been worshipping,
All my life.[48]

In works, both literary and historical, the Sindhi nationalist raised an explicit and determined challenge to the hegemonic Muhammad b. Qasim. G.M. Syed published numerous pamphlets that glorified Raja Dahir as a genuine Sindhi hero who had stood up to the foreign invader - and whose historical memory was being massacred by the Punjabi state. To challenge the official narratives of Muhammad b. Qasim, he called for new histories to be written. In 1976, Syed wrote *Sindh Jo Soomro* (Heroes of Sindh) - consisting of short biographical sketches. The first was of Raja Dahir. Syed made extensive use of *Chachnama* to cull together a highly sympathetic portrayal of the Sindhi king, whom he considered to be the true son of Sindhi soil. Using the thirteenth century narrative, he challenged the hagiographic depictions

48. K. R. Malkani, *The Sindh Story* (Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1984)

of Muhammad b. Qasim:

> On the one hand was such a generous Raja Dahir and on the other hand was the Muslim conqueror and general Muhammad b. Qasim. He was the one who attacked Sindh and enslaved 3000 men and women and sold them in foreign markets. He looted up to 400 million from the Sindhi treasury and send it to his country. He dishonored the guardian of Sindh, Raja Dahar, and his two daughters. Such a cruel and inhuman person cannot be celebrated as a Ghazi and a Mujahid. No one in this country should name libraries, colleges, roads, parks and institutions after him. All natives of Sindh should recognize that Raja Dahar is our national hero and Muhammad b. Qasim is our national enemy.[49]

The depiction of Muhammad b. Qasim's death, from the *Chachnama*, by the cunning daughters of Raja Dahir became a key theme of resistance in popular Sindhi literature. Shaikh Ayaz, in another poem, discusses the pride of these daughters of Sindh - the symbolic honor of the Sindhi soil:

> Raja Dahar,
> Your daughters -
> So beautiful, so well accomplished,
> Who has dragged them out thus?
> With a rope round their waist,
> Their hair dishevelled
> Dresses torn.
> Still, they stand erect
> With heads held high
> Fiercely looking at the tyrant
> With sheer hatred and contempt

49. G. M. Syed. *Sindh Jo Soomo,* Pamphlet.

How beautiful they look, how glorious
As if they are my own poems.[50]

The daughters of Dahir, constructed in the thirteenth century, now stand for another history. Where 'Ali Kufi needed to explicate his moral universe, Sheikh Ayaz intends to tear down other histories. The many histories of Muhammad b. Qasim's find their apotheosis in this singular poem - which captures both the heroic and the villainous, the invader and the resistor, the shame and the pride.

4.4 The First Citizen

It was against this back drop that the state of Pakistan embarked on a comprehensive project to produce a streamlined history of the nation and to have that history taught at all levels and in every province. The charge of framing a new history was initiated under Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (1928-1979) but really emerged as state policy during the dictatorship of General Zia ul-Haq (1924-1988). In plainest terms, the policy seemed to have been to turn Pakistan away from South Asia (India, Bangladesh) and towards West Asia (Saudi Arabia, Egypt). It was to create a new teleology for the state of Pakistan beginning with the Arab merchants of the sixth and seventh centuries who sailed and made settlements in Sindh. It continued with the heroism of Muhammad b. Qasim who planted the standard of Islam on the Indian sub-continent, and then telescoping to the end of the Mughal dynasty (high-

50. Fahmida Riaz. *Pakistan: Literature and Society* (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1986), 19.

lighting Aurangzeb) and the rise of the Muslim intellectuals such as Syed Ahmed Khan and Shah Waliullah, then focusing solely on Muhammad Iqbal and his formulation of the "Ideology of Pakistan" and finally, culminating with the birth of this eleven century long gestating nation of Pakistan.

The effort was to singularly dove tail the history of the nation-state of Pakistan with the history of Islam. It was to project that the Islamic ideal of an *'umma* (community of believers) that, definitionally, has no geographical, ethnic or linguistic boundaries, did not stand in marked tension to a carved out *watan* (state) with various *quam* (nations) facing the ethnic hegemony of Punjab and the linguistic hegemony of Urdu. If there were any contradictions, then, it was the express goal of this constructed history to elide them in young, susceptible minds and create the singular Sunni Muslim Pakistani citizen. This constructed history of the nation was disseminated in official discourses, school textbooks, and public commemorations to explain the ancestral and ideological formation of the citizenry. In its "museumizing imagination," it created tourist spots along the route taken by Muhammad b. Qasim's armies in Sindh - with bent-metal signposts indicating the foundation of the first mosque and so on.[51] The state television broadcasted docu-dramas and discussions on Muhammad b. Qasim, even as the editorials bemoaned the lack of present-day Qasims willing to conquer Kashmir.

51. See Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 178. Also see Ayesha Jalal, "Conjuring Pakistan: History as Official Imaging, " *International Journal of Middle East Studies* vol. 27, no. 1 (Feb., 1995): 73-89.

4.4.1 Muhammad bin Qasim Adabi Society

Muhammad Moosa Bhutto is currently the editor of the Sindh National Academy Trust in Hyderabad, which publishes Sindhi literature and poetics - focusing mainly on new poets and essayists with a religious bent. The Trust is an off-shoot of an earlier literary society, the *Muhammad bin Qasim Adabi Society* which disbanded in 1982. And since then, the Trust has taken over some of the publications which fell under the Society's purview - like the commissioned Sindhi translation of Nasim Hijazi's novel *Muhammad bin Qasim* (1945). When asked, Bhutto explained that the Trust has a firm commitment to keeping the memory of Muhammad b. Qasim alive in the young generation. Since Nasim Hijazi's historical novel is an exemplary book, he said, they have strived to keep the translation in print. Along with translations, the Trust also produces smaller biographies of Muhmmad b. Qasim, and other "heroes of Islam" in Sindhi, holds annual celebrations of the fall of Raja Dāhir, organizes poetry *mehfil* for new verses on this Muslim hero.

Syed Ali Mir Shah, who retired as the Sindh Minister for Irrigation in 2002, was a key founding member of the *Muhammad bin Qasim Adabi Society* in 1968. The impetus came at a *Jam'at-i Islami* gathering, being presided over by Maulana Maududi, when members of the *Jay Sindh* party crashed the stage and threw pamphlets proclaiming Muhammad b. Qasim a Punjabi/Arab imperialist. It was a turbulent time in Sindh, with the *Jam'at-i Islami* leading protests against Ayub's military dictatorship. "Sindhi families were naming their kids Dahir!," exclaimed Saeed Ali Mir Shah, who was on that stage forty

years ago.[52] In an effort to counter this "abuse of history," Maulana Maududi asked the Sindhi members of the *JI* to create a literary society which could effectively combat such anti-Islamic, pro-Hindu sentiments.

The Adabi Society organized yearly conferences on Muhammad b. Qasim - in Sukkur in 1968, in Larkana in 1969, in Mirpurkhas in 1970, and in Nawab Shah in 1971. Syed Ali Mir Shah became the President of the Society in 1971. He recalled that the Society had three explicit goals: promoting Islamic governance and values in Sindh, keeping Sindh in Pakistan, and propagating Islamic history. These goals were to to be met explicitly through literature and literary efforts. They invited speakers to political and literary functions, elicited editorials and op-eds from historians and researchers for publications and distributed pamphlets highlighting the greatness of Muhammad b. Qasim. The advisory council for the society included prominent *JI* functionaries as well as members of various political parties. The funding for the Society's efforts came from the *JI* General Council, from local industrialists and Karachi notables, as well as Sindhi land-holding elites. It was from these private and semi-private hands that the defense of the history of Muhammad b. Qasim passed into the hands of the state.

4.4.2 Constructing A New Past

For the first thirty years of its existence, the state did not display any great interest in this history. An examination of textbooks, with the usual official

52. Saeed Ali Mir Shah: Personal Communication, 01/30/2003.

histories, reveals only cursory notes about the eighth century conquest. However, the partition of East Pakistan forced a re-framing of Pakistan's history in South Asia. If, as the "Two Nation Theory" had argued, Pakistan was to be the home for a unitary nation of Muslims, then the formation of another Muslim majority state in South Asia needed to be addressed.

That this was a practice started after 1971 is clear when one examines school textbooks from the 50s and 60s. The *Sustainable Development Policy Institute*'s 2003 report on textbooks in Pakistan, *The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan* found that in the intermediate grades (9th and 10th) the textbooks in the 50s did mention Hindus, and were generally appreciative of leaders such as Gandhi. In one instance, in a prescribed secondary text, there were even remarks critical of Muhammad b. Qasim (albeit within the framework of the national mythology), "We have high regard for Muhammad bin Qasim. He laid the foundation for the Muslim rule in India. But the first brick of the foundation was defective. Had Muhammad bin Qasim and the conquerors that followed relied less on sword to increase their numerical strength and more on preaching and other methods, we would have been spared of the events because of which we are presently facing tribulations."[53]

Under Zia ul-Haq, the process of Islamization eliminated such doubts from the curriculum. On 3 October 1977, he called for a national "New Education Policy" where he proclaimed that one of the goals for state education was to "create an awareness of the Pakistani nation as a part of the universal Muslim Ummah striving through successive stages to spread the message of

53. A. H. Nayyar and Ahmad Salim (ed). *The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan* (Islamabad: Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2003), 66.

Islam throughout the world."[54] In his inaugural address to that conference, he called attention to the centrality of Islamic history to Pakistan's ideology, and mandated Arabic instruction from mid-level grades, and established the mosque as the fundamental unit of public education. His overall strategy had this explicit goal, "To use Islam and Pakistani nationalism to prevent ethnic groups from breaking away from the center and to build a modern, cohesive nation out of different linguistic and ethnic groups."[55]

Zia ul-Haq's Sunnification and Arabization policies - or more precisely, his turn towards Saudi Arabia can be examined within two frameworks. From an economic standpoint, Pakistan's intimate aid and migrant worker relationship with Saudi Arabia (and the Gulf states, in general) became the central focus of internal and external policy during Zia's regime. Between 1975 and 1985, the number of Pakistanis in the Gulf states rose from 205,000 to 446,000 annually with over 2.5 billion dollars (per anum) in remittance flowing back.[56] At its height in the mid-80s, nearly 10% of Pakistan's adult male work-force was employed in the Gulf states.[57] These migrant workers - over 80% were unskilled or semi-skilled - usually lasted for roughly six years in the Gulf states and were replaced by other family, clan, tribe or village members. Their remissions home - goods and cash - were the dominant fac-

54. Rafiullah Shehab. *Fifty Years of Pakistan* (Lahore: Maqbool Academy, 1990), 299.

55. Tariq Rahman, "Education in Pakistan: A Survey" in Craig Baxter (ed.) *Pakistan on the Brink: Politics, Economics, and Society* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2004), 173.

56. Fred Halliday, "Labor Migration in the Arab World." *Migrant Workers in the Middle East*, MERIP Reports, no. 123, (May, 1984), 3-10.

57. Naghma Imdad, "L'émigration pakistanaise dans le Golfe et ses répercussions sur le pays d'origine," *Revue Tiers Monde*, vol. 26 no. 103, (1985): 553-66.

tor in bolstering Pakistani economy throughout the 1970s and 80s and one of the key factors in Pakistan's turn towards West Asia under Zia ul Haq. From an political standpoint, Zia ul-Haq had a genuine fear that the 1979 Islamic Revolution will spill out of Iran and radicalize the Shi'a population in Pakistan. This prompted him to create counter-Shi'a militia groups such as the *Anjuman Sipah-e Sahaba* (Organization of the Soldiers of the Companions).[58] His *jihad* policies in Kashmir and Afghanistan and the long term radicalization of large segments of population is a history that need not detain us here. What is, however, pertinent to our narrative is that his policies not only created new pasts for Pakistan (in Muhammad b. Qasim) but also new forms of social prestige, such as highlighting genealogical ties to Arabia among Punjabis. The familial caste of *'Ar'ain*, for example, tout their descent from Muhammad b. Qasim's army.

The educational policies of 1977 were put in effect across the four educational boards in the country. The new textbooks introduced Muhammad b. Qasim from the 4th grade onwards - progressively adding more historical detail and texture to the narrative. They highlighted the high character and ideals of Muhammad b. Qasim: "For the first time the people of Sindh were introduced to Islam, its political system and way of government. The people here had seen only the atrocities of the Hindu rajas... the people of Sindh were so much impressed by the benevolence of Muslims that they regarded Muhammad bin Qasim as their savior."[59] They also demonstrated to the young Pakistani

58. See S. V. R. Nasr. *Islamic Leviathan: Islam and the Making of State Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001)

59. *Civics for Class IX and X*, (Lahore: Punjab Textbook Board, 2001), 19-20.

the transformative powers of his conduct: "Muhammad b. Qasim punished severely the pirates who had attacked the ship, and everyone was cowed by him. He constructed an awe-inspiring mosque in Daybul. Because of the good treatment afforded to the Hindus, they began to convert to Islam in droves."[60]

The state was not the sole agent involved in the creation, sustenance and propagation of such narratives. Extra-governmental organizations, research societies, national councils and Islamicist organizations participated vigorously in this enterprise. Numerous *Heroes of Islam* series emerged. In form, they were short biographies of Generals from early Islam and figures from the nationalist struggle. The authors were rarely academically trained historians but they did take great pains to emphasize genuine historical inquiry and research into the sources by highlighting Orientalist historians and major works of South Asian or Islamic historiography. Often retired military or civil personnel, they usually espoused one of these two, or both, goals in the writing of their histories. first "to acquaint boys and girls with the spiritual possessions of which they are to be guardians,"[61] and second, to battle corruptions in history:

> The 1971 Indo-Pakistan War is an account of painful memories. Severance of Pakistan's eastern wing was a great national tragedy. With so many hushed up and hidden facts having now surfaced, it can be surmised that Pakistan was made the victim of a methodically planned international conspiracy. During the 1971 war and within two years of post war period, more than 200 books were printed in India on East Bengal. Many western writers strength-

60. *Social Studies for Class 6*, (Lahore: Punjab Textbook Board, 2003), 72.

61. Fazl Ahmad. *Muhammad bin Qasim* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1968), 8.

> ened the viewpoint of the Hindu writers due to mutuality of interests. The objective behind their large-scale print warfare was to distort history, paint Pakistani armed forces as fascists,and justify Indian intervention and to disprove the two-nation theory.[62]

Muhammad b. Qasim, in these secondary histories, is the "noblest son of Islam" whose piety certainly parallels the piety he was afforded by the medieval Persian chronicles. In these texts, everything from textbooks, scholarly articles, independent histories, and comic books, Muhammad b. Qasim emerges as a latter-day super-hero, unsullied by the vagaries of later histories, his youth an immediate attraction to the young, his devotion unquestionable. In fact, the state could not have imagined a better "First Citizen" of Pakistan. But, there is one additional force for the imagination, for the placement of Muhammad b. Qasim in the political memory of Pakistan. For that, we turn to the historical novels of Nasim Hijazi and Inayatullah Iltamish.

4.5 The Hero of Islam

The jacket of the 2002 edition of Nasim Hijazi's *Muhammad b. Qasim* carries two endorsments. On the front flap, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan - the progenitor of Pakistan's nuclear plants - writes from Kahota, Rawalpindi:

> I plead to the youth of Pakistan that they must read the novels of Nasim Hijazi - especially *Aur Talwar Tut Gai, Akhri Chatan, Shaheen, Khaq aur Khoon, Yusuf bin Tashkain* and *Muhammad b. Qasim* - and learn of the golden history of their history so that it evokes in them the spirit of service to their nation and their country"

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62. Asif Haroon. *Muhammad Bin Qasim to General Pervez Musharraf: Triumphs, Tribulations, Scars of 1971 Tragedy and Current Challenges*(Rawalpindi: Pap Board Printers Ltd, 2002), 3.

On the back flap, Maulana Maududi - the founder of *Jamat-i Islami*, the foremost Islamic party in Pakistan and one of the main intellectuals of the Islamic revivalist movements - declares:

> In my opinion Nasim sahib has done a service for the nation by writing this books. Instead of reading stories of love and infatuation or ideologies which will lead them astray, they should read these books. They will receive a lesson (spiritual) and they will also gain the pleasure for which they read novels.[63]

These are not mere endorsements for a literary work. They demonstrate, in effect, the fundamental role this novel acquired into the task of sustaining the ideology of Pakistan. Though it was written in 1943, it rose to prominence during the 1970s and, since than, has gone through countless editions, and is, by far, the most widely read novel in Pakistan's history.

The genre of historical novels in Urdu is intimately tied to the late nineteenth century project of recuperating the glories of Muslim pasts for the youth. Some of the earliest Urdu novels such as *Fasana-i Azad* (1880) by Ratan Nath Sarshar (1846-1902) and *Ibn al-Waqt* (1888) by Nazir Ahmad already delved into historical themes but it was Abdul Halim Sharar (1865-1926) who formally introduced the historical novel in Urdu with his *Malik Aziz Varjana* - serialized in *Dilgudaz* in 1888 and published in a single volume in 1889. His later novels *Hasan aur Angalina* (1889), *Mansur Mohana* (1890), *Qais aur Lubna* (1891), *Flora Florinda* (1899) were all enormously popular. During the same period, with similar concerns in mind, Jurjī Zaydān (1861-1914) was producing historical novels in Arabic - including *Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf* (1909).

63. Nasim Hijazi. *Muhammad b. Qasim* (Lahore: Jahangir Book Depot, 2002)

Nasim Hijazi, *nom de plume* of Muhammad Ashraf (1914-1996) came from an eastern Punjabi family. Inspired at an early age by Sharar's novels, and for Shibli's *al-Farooq* (biography of Umar b. Khattab), he decided to pursue a career as a novelist - choosing the pen-name *Hijazi* to highlight his familial lineage to the Arab conquerors. He was fervently nationalist, and communal in his outlook, as he described in a interview with the Pakistan Radio, in 1983:

> In my school days, I could never even imagine that a Hindu would rule over me. The hatred of Congress and Brahmanical politics was my inheritance. I was lucky that, at an age when non-Muslims, and even some Muslim, were listening to the tales of Ravana and Hanuman, my elders told me the stories of Khalid b. Walid, Muhammad b. Qasim, Tariq b. Ziyad and Mahmud Ghaznavi. These were the faith-healing stories which I remember.[64]

He published his first short story, "Shudar," in a monthly *Hikayat-i Islam* in 1938. That same year, he finished his first novel *Dastan-e Mujahid* (The Epic of the Holy Warrior) which introduced the story of Muhammad b. Qasim. It was not, however, published until 1943. During this time, Hijazi worked as a journalist in Karachi, covering the activities in Quetta and interior Sindh, while also serving in the Muslim League office. As an active member of the nationalist struggle, Hijazi explicitly tied his artistic writings with his nationalist fervor.[65]

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64. Tasaduq Husain Raja. *Nasim Hijazi: Aik Muta'ila* [Nasim Hijazi: A Study] (Lahore: Qaumi Kutb Khana, 1987), 293.

65. For a detailed examination of Nasim Hijazi's life and works, see Mumtaz Umar, "Nasim Hijazi ki Tarikhi Naval Nigari ka Tahqiqi aur Tankidi Tajzia" (Ph.D. diss., Karachi University, 2003)

Dastan-e Mujahid, taking place between the years, 694 and 742 in a household in Basra and set within a love triangle, is the story of the early campaigns of Arabs in Khurāsān and Hind. The two male protagonists join the campaigns of Muhammad b. Qasim and Qutayba b. Muslim in various stages. Even in this limited role, Hijazi endows Muhammad b. Qasim with supernatural strength and an empathetic spirit - as he guides the lovers to their eventual meeting.

Muhammad b. Qasim, first published in 1945, also begins with a love story - that of the woman captured by the pirates off the coast of Daybul. The travails of the woman Naheed, at the hands of the pirates and in Dahir's dungeons and the efforts of a young Arab soldier to free her, form the first half of the book. The second half begins with the departure of Muhammad b. Qasim to Sindh at the command of Hajjaj b. Yusuf. His conquests show his magnanimous behavior towards the people of Sindh who soon adopt him as their own ruler. A presumptuous sculptor creates an image of Muhammad b. Qasim, and is about to install it in a temple when Muhammad hears of it, and shatters it to pieces.[66] Though, we do not know the extent to which, if any, Nasim Hijazi relied on *Chachnama,* it is instructive that he does not use the death of Muhammad b. Qasim as depicted in that text. Muhammad b. Qasim, in Nasim Hijazi's work, dies a victim of a caliphal intrigue and not of Sindhi treachery.

66. This is the *only* place that the episode of the idol from al-Balādhurī is recreated throughout the subsequent history of Muhammad b. Qasim. It is instructive to note that in al-Balādhurī, the idol was created after his departure, but in Hijazi's retelling, the episode appears as another moment of iconoclasm.

The popularity of *Muhammad b. Qasim* encouraged the arrival of other retellings on the market. Allama Inayatullah Iltamish (d. 2002) ran a popular monthly *Hikayat* from Lahore, starting in 1972. He was a veteran of the 1965 war with India, and a firm believer of the "moral decay of the country's youth."[67] *Sitara Jo Tut Giya* (Broken Star) was published in 1985 to correct the "historical errors" found in "that other novelist's *filmi* Muhammad b. Qasim."[68] Inayatullah relied heavily on the text of *Chachnama* - copying the entirety of some of the correspondence between Hajjaj and Muhammad - as well as, depicting a much harsher conqueror. Muhammad b. Qasim is morally averse to Dahir, whom he suspects of consummating his marriage with his sister. Inayatullah was followed by Sadiq Husain Siddiqui whose *Muhammad b. Qasim* (1997) was subtitled, *A Delightful Historical Epic*. It describes a Muhammad b. Qasim torn between the love of a Muslim girl, Tahira, and that of Ladi, Dahir's wife. True to its word, the delightful ending has Ladi converting to Islam and Muhammad b. Qasim marrying both women (who had grown quite close over the course of the campaign).

To these novels, one can add numerous comic books, a few plays, a two-hour PTV drama serial *Labaik* which premiered in 2002. These many facets of Muhammad b. Qasim's historical imaginary do not overlap much in their usage of previous histories, their intentions or their target audiences. In effect, some of them are quite contradictory to each other, though they all forward claims of historical authenticity. Taken collectively, they do reveal

67. An essay, published in *Hikayat*, imagined Muhammad b. Qasim reborn and in New York, literally slapping the Muslim youth out of their heroin-induced stupor.

68. Inayatullah Iltamish, *Sitara Jo Tut Giya* (Delhi: Farid Book Depot, 2004), 2

wide-spread and deep engagement of the Pakistani publics with the history of Muhammad b. Qasim. On the national stage, in the novels and other artistic works mentioned above, he remains venerated, a figure beyond reproach, and onto whom, a nation can project its finest ideals.

4.6 The New Turn

The end of the Zia ul-Haq regime, in 1988, and the nuclear test, in 1988, had shifted the state's historical imaginary from Muhammad b. Qasim to the more combative Mohammad Ghauri. Muhammad b. Qasim continues to be taught in the school but the Pakistani military has not named any missiles, nuclear facilities, brigades, or buildings after him. Ghauri and Ghazanavi, on the other hand, have had more than their fair share.

The political memory of Muhammad b. Qasim seemed to have retreated from public space - even the Sindhi challenge apparently routinized. However, during this summer of 2008, a new public manifestation of Muhammad b. Qasim emerged. Dr Aafia Siddiqi, a Pakistani woman, accused by the U.S. state of being an al-Qaeda operative was apprehended in Afghanistan, and shipped to New York to stand trial.

Her arrest and deportation has caused immense public scrutiny in Pakistani media and it remains an on-going saga. What caught my attention were the public pleas - by columnists and editorials - for a Muhammad b. Qasim to rescue her, "I wish that this nation had a Muhammad b. Qasim who could hear

the screams of Aafia Siddiqui, and help her. We need him and his army."[69]. Another columnist raised the specter of "Muhammad b. Qasim of the pen":

> In that NY jail, a daughter of my nation, is also calling for a Muhammad b. Qasim or a Mahmud Ghaznavi. She must be remembering the justice of Umar Farooq. But my dear sister, our leaders cannot break their internal and external agreements with New York and Washington. Because after giving you away, along with 600 others, those agreements are even stronger. And we also got millions of dollars. Now only the American clouds are raining dollars on our thoughts and emotions. But my sister, do not despair, the Muhammad b. Qasims of "Pen" are coming to your rescue.[70]

Other commentators drew explicit comparisons to the Muslim women kidnapped by pirates in the eighth century. There are no limits to the social functions of the past. The history and memory of Muhammad b. Qasim will continue to be used and utilized. I hope that this look at the historiography of this particular hero provides a glimpse into the mechanics of such usages.

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69. Ishtiaq Beg, "Aafia Siddiqui, Qaum tumharay Sath hai" Daily Jang, August 06, 2008.

70. Nasrullah Bhatti, "American qaidi Simon Narwan aur Aafia Siddiqui", *Daily Waqt*, August 26, 2008.

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